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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:
<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000cde9>

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Elaine Browne M.Ed

Grammar matters? Teaching Irish as a
second language in Ireland

A dissertation submitted to The Open University in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of:

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

Date of Submission: 31.01.17

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a small-scale investigation into practising primary teachers' perspectives on the role of English grammar in second language teaching in the Irish context where English is the medium of instruction.

A mixed methods approach was employed to investigate whether having a sound knowledge of English grammar might facilitate the teaching of Irish grammar. Teachers' perspectives on pedagogical practice were gathered via the employment of questionnaires, interviews and observations. Fifteen questionnaire respondents contributed perspectives on learning and teaching English and Irish grammar in the Irish context and three of these provided follow-up interviews and observations.

Applying both thematic and sociocultural theorising enabled understandings to be built within the uniqueness of the Irish teaching context. The findings revealed that a sound knowledge of English grammar supports the learning of grammar in Irish as a second language. While teachers appreciate the importance of knowledge of grammar to teach languages, they do not necessarily have a sound knowledge of grammar in either English or Irish. This limitation in grammar knowledge may impact negatively when teaching Irish as a second language. Based on these findings it is recommended that grammar should hold a more prominent place in the language curriculum and the teaching of grammar should be integrated within the language curriculum for both children in schools and trainee teachers to increase the quality of Irish second language teaching in the Irish context.

**This thesis is dedicated to Úna, my late mother who sowed the seeds of
curiosity ...**

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a *hanam*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of the participants for their frank and generous contributions to this project and for welcoming me into their classrooms.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Caroline Bligh for her unwavering support and Klaus-Dieter Rossade for always bringing clarity of thought when needed. I wish to express wholeheartedly my appreciation for their encouragement, enthusiasm and patience on this journey.

Finally, I thank my children Únaín and Eoin for their support and opportune light-heartedness and my sister Ruth for her critical role and for being there.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The focus

This study focuses on the significance and role of English grammar in the field of second language (L2) teaching. More specifically, it examines whether primary teachers use a knowledge of English grammar to teach Irish grammar. My motivation for this choice of topic was twofold. Firstly, was my own interest in grammar and grammar teaching because I have always been interested in the mechanisms of languages, both as a pupil and as a teacher in the field of Irish as a second language. Secondly, I was motivated by what I saw as a clear need for such work in the field of L2 teaching in Ireland. In the course of my professional practice, both as a primary classroom teacher and as a L2 teacher, it seemed that pupils were unable to grasp a knowledge of grammar in their second and third language learning. In attempting to help them, by referring to grammar in their first language, I observed also a lack of understanding of grammar in their first language. Later on in my professional practice, both as a school principal and as a director of English as a second language at a summer school, I noticed a lack of grammatical knowledge among the teachers whom I managed. On reflection, the lack of understanding in second and any further language learning appeared to stem from not having learned grammar in their first language.

The role and significance of grammar knowledge within L2 teaching has been deemed inconclusive (Ellis, 2005). However, from the professional perspective of a principal teacher working in an Irish primary school, the question arose of how best to explore the significance of grammar teaching in a L2 teaching context. This research therefore aims to explore the significance of grammar knowledge in L2 teaching of Irish from an alternative perspective, i.e. from the teachers, viewed within the Irish sociocultural

context. In addition, this research supports closer links between research on teaching and the education of L2 teachers.

My intention in this opening chapter is to frame the study by outlining its general aims, by setting the Irish context, by providing an introductory comment on the methodological orientation of the work, and by describing the contents of this thesis. In recent years L2 teaching is no longer considered as the application of method. Following the lead provided by mainstream educational research, attention has been given to the central role which teachers' subjective interpretations of teaching have on their instructional decisions. This study however adopts a sociocultural lens to explore the influence of sociocultural context on beliefs (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011).

1.2 A sociocultural perspective

There has been a wide range of theoretical lenses employed to study teachers' beliefs of which the cognitive perspective has been the most dominant (Kalaja and Barcelos, 2013; Horowitz, 1999). A cognitive perspective presents beliefs as relatively stable mental depictions about the nature of language learning (Mohebi and Khodady, 2011). While cognitive research presents a generic portrayal of beliefs, it has been critiqued because it overlooks the diverse nature of learner beliefs (Yang and Kim, 2011) and overemphasises the individuality of mental knowledge. Zhong (2014) highlights how research no longer focuses merely on patterns of beliefs but seeks to investigate their dynamic nature. A sociocultural perspective meets the need for an alternative approach to researching beliefs (Kalaja and Barcelos, 2013). Sociocultural research advocates that beliefs are mediated by various sociocultural factors (Mercer, 2011; Yang and Kim 2011). It is still not known what factors change learners' beliefs and this needs to be further researched. The rise of sociocultural theory has therefore focused researchers' attention on the 'contextually situated nature of learner beliefs and their relationship with the socio-cultural environment'

(Negueruela-Azarola 2011, p. 368). Recognising the contextual differences is not only of relevance to language teachers beliefs but increases understanding of beliefs about language learning. The way teachers construct and reconstruct their perceptions about grammar learning within an educational setting is significant. In summary a sociocultural perspective views beliefs as being socially and contextually situated so that understanding beliefs in particular social contexts focuses on their mediation by sociocultural factors (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011).

Sociocultural perspective has been defined as ‘A perspective describing people’s behaviour and mental processes as shaped in part by their social and/or cultural contact, including race, gender, and nationality’ (Sanderson, 2010). Sociocultural theory promotes awareness of circumstances surrounding individuals and how their behaviours are affected specifically by their surrounding social and cultural factors.

Beliefs are dynamic and context bound (Barcelos, 2015; Amuzie and Winke, 2009). When teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices are separated the situated and social nature of beliefs is over-simplified. Beliefs may be seen as a means of understanding what teachers do and from this perspective it is professional practice that should be the focus as well as the belief. This research therefore supports a sociocultural approach to researching beliefs (Yang and Kim, 2011).

The sociocultural perspective maintains that a person interacts and applies cultural, physical and symbolic tools to mediate and control their relationship with others and with themselves. During interactions between the individual and the social world, sociocultural and contextual factors also play essential roles in an individual’s language learning (Lantolf, 2000). Gao (2010) highlights that beliefs may be mediated by a range of issues such as learner values and attitudes towards learning a foreign language, cultural artefacts such as assessment methods and influences such as parents, teachers and peers. Yang and Kim (2011) employed a sociocultural lens to explore how two second language learners’

beliefs changed in study abroad contexts. They found that learners' beliefs adapted to their experiences and in line with their learning goals. Mercer (2011) studied features of successful language learners and proposed seeing learner beliefs in terms of appropriacy 'for an individual's personal history, affordances, contexts and purpose' (p. 70).

1.3 The sociopolitical context: a brief history

After 500 years of domination by the English nation, Ireland achieved political independence from England for 26 out of its 32 counties through the war of independence. The Irish state was founded in 1921 as a consequence of this. Cultural and political organisations were unanimous that Ireland should emphasise its individuality as an independent nation. The restoration of the Irish Language became a key policy objective of successive governments because the English language came to symbolise national and cultural suppression. In constitutional terms Irish became the first language and remains so today. The newly established Department of Education declared that its aim was 'to work with all its might for the strengthening of the national fibre by giving the language, history, music and tradition of Ireland their natural place in the life of Irish schools' (Department of Education, 1925, p. 6). The main characteristics of an Irish identity were Catholicism and the Irish language. The education curriculum that was introduced was framed along these nationalist lines and represented national as opposed to child-centred interests and therefore the content was not based directly on the needs, interests or abilities of the child. In school the range of subjects taught became more limited and the supremacy of Irish as a school subject was evident in the way it was taught for one hour per day and also in the way that Irish was introduced as the medium of instruction in infant classes. There was not consideration given to the possible effects of this action on the child. The Irish language was considered in nationalist terms as being necessary for identity and therefore necessary for the child.

The curriculum framed in 1922 became the foundation for curriculum provision over the following 50 years and any variations introduced did not change its underlying ethos. The national aim to produce Irish speakers in this way was never realised and most pupils left national schools with a simple grasp of the spoken language (Kelly, 2002). By 1924 fewer than 20% of teachers had a Bilingual Certificate or higher, the qualification which was considered necessary to use Irish as a medium of instruction (The Irish Free State, *Dáil Debates*, 1925). In the 1940s, only 12% of schools used Irish as a medium of instruction and this had declined significantly by the 1960s (Department of Education, 1947, p. 104, 1967a, p. 16).

A possible hurdle with each revision of the curriculum has been the lack of a strategic focus on enactment aligned to the educational context of the time. In general, policies have been designed by policymakers with particular expertise in a curriculum area, setting out high aims for the classroom teacher. When curricula have been devised usually for immediate implementation, the work of the central authority and the curriculum change was seen to be finished. Policy development represents the first step in effecting change in practice (Evans, 1996; Fullan, 1993). Policy development did not give any indication on how to get from the current practice at each time to the aspired changes.

1.4 L2 teaching in Irish primary schools

Currently the government has put forward a 20-year (2010–2030) strategy for the Irish language, emphasising its importance. The underlying assumption is that children can learn more effectively if language experience in school reflects as widely and as truly as possible the linguistic expression of Irish social and historical experience.

According to Chastain (1988), language and culture are inseparably linked. Damen (1987) emphasises that for language to be meaningful, it must be linked to culture and be culture specific. Understanding any type of intercultural communication depends on the

participants' awareness of the social and cultural significance of the words and expressions used. It is language in its cultural context that creates meaning and so from a sociocultural view, understanding the nature of the relationship between language and culture is central to the process of learning another language. Language is used to convey meaning, but meaning is determined by culture. Language has been recognised as the most important sociocultural tool because language facilitates the teaching of all tool use and it is vital to the process of developing higher psychological functions (Karpov, 2003; Rogoff, 1990).

The learning and teaching of language in the *New Language Curriculum* in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2016) encompasses both English and Irish. L2 teaching in Irish primary schools is qualitatively different from what might be normally understood by that term, as it addresses the teaching of both English and Irish languages. In the case of teaching Irish as a second language, which is the practice in the majority of schools, this arises because of factors connected with Irish that would not pertain if French, for example, were the second language. These factors originate in Irish social, linguistic and historical experience.

There is an intricate linguistic relationship between Irish and English which came about as a result of the coexistence of the two languages from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. Although this shared coexistence concluded with the domination of English as the mother language of the majority of the population, the vocabulary, the grammatical structure and the idiomatic slant of spoken English in Ireland today, reflect the influence of the Irish language. For example, an English-speaking person in Ireland may use idioms such as 'can I get in there please?' when meaning 'excuse me please' and this derives from the Irish language expression '*an féidir liom dul isteach ann?*' Other English speakers would not understand this, nor use English in that way. Similarly (although to a lesser degree), spoken Irish reflects the influence from English, e.g. the expression to 'hit the road' meaning to leave has been used in its Irish form '*an bóthar a bhualadh*'. The social,

economic and national events that brought these experiences about and the context in which the experiences came about became part of the Irish historical experience.

Language, either Irish or English, is a vital expression in psychological and social terms of the Irish national identity and, as such, reflects some of the hopes and struggles of the Irish experience.

It is currently a time of change within the curriculum in relation to teaching Irish and English. It has been recognised that the approach to language teaching should not be seen in terms of teaching Irish or English or a modern language but in the context of language teaching as one unit (Department of Education and Skills, 2016). The Irish and English language curriculums were until recently two independent language areas and therefore two separate elements of the whole primary school curriculum. In 2012 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published three new research reports to support the development of a new language curriculum at primary level. One of these reports by Ó'Duibhir and Cummins (2012) referred to the modern languages in primary schools initiative which saw the optional introduction of a European language. Ó'Duibhir and Cummins (2012) recommended the introduction of an integrated language curriculum to ensure language skills such as grammar are transferred effectively from one language to the other, whether that is English, Irish or another modern language. Cummins (1978) states that when children develop literacy skills in a language such as English, they are not only learning literacy in English but also developing a foundation or common underlying proficiency which enables the transfer of literacy skills and learning strategies to additional languages that they may learn. In the same way it may be argued that when children learn grammar in English this understanding is transferred to another language that they learn, e.g. Irish, so that the grammatical concept has been transferred and children need to learn the language to describe this concept only.

The oral language element of the *New Language Curriculum* in Ireland

(Department of Education and Skills, 2016) classifies Irish and English together and has been implemented in the junior end (4- to 8-year-old pupils) of the primary school as of September 2016. Hence from then onwards the curriculum encompasses both Irish and English. This is in recognition of the scope for integration and transfer between Irish and English, and leads to the question as to whether grammar teaching in both English and Irish will be beneficial to both languages. The *New Language Curriculum* in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2016) comprises three strands: Communicative Competence; Language Awareness; and Cultural Awareness. The strand units are listening, speaking, reading and writing. When grammar is taught simply as rules, acquiring grammar becomes the only goal of language learning. Pupils do not begin to engage with language as a communicative reality but simply as an academic exercise or as a memorising task. It is envisaged that developing communicative competence will enable the child to interact effectively with others, in different ways. Language is used for communication and acquiring a new language involves learning how to use words, rules and knowledge about language purposefully. This understanding of language sees a language not simply as a social practice and not just a body of language to be learned (Kramsch, 1994). Language is something that is used in daily lives and is used to express, create and interpret meanings and to establish and maintain social and interpersonal relationships. It is through interpersonal learning that pupils use language as a key tool for learning (Vygotsky, 1978), to play games, and to role play. Communication is seen as the principal reason for learning a language (Widdowson, 1977). A communicative approach, which is also used in the *New Language Curriculum* in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2016) concentrates on the needs and interests of the learner, and opportunities are given to pupils to learn the language within classroom activities modelled on real live situations. The language awareness dimension of the *New Language Curriculum* in Ireland

(Department of Education and Skills, 2016) draws pupils' attention to how language is learnt in social and communicative circumstances, how language works in its grammar, and to the similarities and differences between languages including grammar. Therefore grammar is more than a code because it requires social practices of interpreting and making meanings. When the sociocultural view of learning language is understood as a social practice, teachers can provide opportunities to go beyond what is already known and to learn to give children learning skills as users and analysers of language (Svalberg, 2007).

Widdowson (1990) and Hymes (1972) state that when children are learning grammar they are gaining not only knowledge of grammar, but in addition knowledge of sociocultural rules that are part of the use of that grammar. These are sociocultural rules of when or when not to speak, what to talk about and in what manner, at the same time as they acquire knowledge of grammatical rules. They are learning how language is used to create and represent meanings, i.e. how to communicate with others and to engage with the communication of others. Grammar as part of language fosters an awareness of the nature of language and its impact on the world (Svalberg, 2007). The understanding of grammar as a part of language affects what happens in the classroom and the ways in which learners begin to understand the relationship between their own languages and the languages they are learning. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted not only how the cultural and historical setting shaped interactions but also the importance of what the child brought to the interaction as well. Leont'ev (1981), a colleague of Vygotsky, used the term 'appropriation' to characterise the process of internalisation: 'The child has come to an understanding that it is adequate for using the culturally elaborated object in the novel life circumstances he encounters' (quoted in Newman et al., 1989, p. 630).

1.5 The primary school context

In the Irish primary school system, Irish and English are taught from the beginning of a child's school life. Constitutional status of supremacy is given to the Irish language despite the fact that the Irish language is a low-utility entity. In reality, Irish is a minority second language which is spoken in remote areas of Ireland and would not be heard on a daily basis by most pupils outside of school. The supremacy of Irish is reflected in the curriculum through the priority that is given to the teaching and learning of Irish. Irish, like other subjects, is part of an integrated learning construct that is the *Primary School Curriculum* in Ireland (Department of Education and Science, 1999) and the *New Language Curriculum* in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2016) but it is also a compulsory subject at secondary level. Teachers are obliged to use Irish in the course of teaching other subjects. Teachers are obliged to speak only Irish when teaching Irish. This is in attempt to maximise learners' exposure to the target language and therefore their learning opportunities (Cameron, 2015). The underlying assumption is that the more language pupils hear, the more they will learn. Where a language such as Irish is not heard outside the classroom, it is important that children hear as much as possible when they are in class. However, it may be oversimplistic to assume that there is a simple linear relationship between exposure to language and learning. Teaching and learning are more complex than this and it may be that certain uses of a common mother tongue might in fact support the learning of the second language. Cameron (2015) sums this up when she says 'Use as much of the target language as possible and ensure the use of the first language supports the child's language learning' (p. 199).

All primary school teachers teach Irish, and in the system generally there is a 95-year professional history and experience in teaching the language. Teachers therefore have a dual role in teaching both English and Irish, either as a first language in the case of the

minority Gaelscoileanna, or as a second language in the case of the majority of schools where English is the medium of instruction.

Until 2012 (due to budgetary reductions by the Irish government) the Modern Languages Initiative was also employed in primary schools, teaching some European languages. Wang (2009) reported that teachers seem to de-emphasise grammar accuracy in their language classrooms. An observational study was carried out by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (Department of Education and Science, 2007). It involved 159 classes and the assessment was based on the curriculum framework for Irish rather than upon a measure of pupil achievement in Irish. This research reported that 50% of the teachers observed by the inspectors were deemed to have a bad standard of Irish teaching and learning in their classes. The report recommended that ‘a systematic, structured approach is required for teaching Irish, and teachers require clear guidelines on methodologies so that pupils’ language ability can be developed in a systematic and detailed manner’ (Department of Education and Science, 2007, p. 76). The relevance of Mitchell’s recommendations (2000) – for the British context – that the government must actively engage in debate regarding the proper linguistic content of the teacher education curriculum for mother tongue/or standard language teachers, as well as for foreign language teachers, resonates here.

The Council of Europe has emphasised the importance of developing language policies in member states in order to enhance the communicative competence of European citizens. Ó’Laoire (2003, p. 95) highlights that Ireland’s language in educational policy is ‘tacit or implicit’ and a certain number of hours are spent teaching languages per week for a certain number of years. Only certain languages are taught. Languages are taught and examined in a certain way.

In the introduction to the *Primary School Curriculum* in Ireland (Department of Education and Science, 1999) it is stated that the English language curriculum should

enable the child to develop a command of grammar (p. 11). ‘Some’ of the elements of grammar are addressed formally, ‘particularly in senior classes’.

1.6 Research questions

Grammar teaching has been a recurrent issue of interest in the field of L2 teaching. Ellis (2005) summarises research issues on the topic of grammar in Appendix 1. Much effort has been invested into studying whether formal instruction makes any difference to the process of learning a second language (see Appendix 2). Similarly, the issue of which instructional methods are most effective in enabling students to develop an understanding of L2 grammar has also been given attention by researchers (see Appendix 3).

However, research into the issue of what L2 teachers in classrooms do if or when they teach grammar has, until recently, attracted less interest. In addition, systematic investigations of the factors which influence decisions L2 teachers make during formal instruction are virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, some educational research has indicated that the key to understanding the nature of instructional processes lies in analysing both teachers’ actions in the classroom as well as the thinking behind those actions which are influenced by context.

Research into learners’ awareness of their first language when processing their second language has taken place with adolescent and adult learners in the Canadian context. Immersion is a method of teaching a second language in which the learner’s second language is the medium of classroom instruction. Ó’Laoire (2004) has also undertaken a study of metalinguistic awareness in L2/L3 learners after 13 years of learning Irish. Within the Irish context, in a small-scale study based on the pre-test and post-test results of immersion students, Ó’Duibhir (2012) found that grammar teaching was important within an immersion context. There have not been any studies done in the Irish context that investigate whether or not grammar supports the teaching of additional

languages in English medium schools. Furthermore, within the Irish context there have not been any studies done on primary children developing metalinguistic awareness and their awareness of L1 on L2. Another question which has emerged as a result of this study is whether grammar has a key role in developing competence in formal academic language and whether teaching grammar could accelerate the acquisition of academic language.

This research addresses the following questions

1. What are primary teachers of Irish's perspectives on teaching and learning grammar in the Irish context?
2. Does a knowledge of English grammar support the teaching of Irish as a second language in the Irish context?

1.7 Research approach

Issues of methodology are discussed in Chapter 3, but to help readers frame this study the research stance is discussed briefly here. The study employs a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods methodology presents as an appropriate means to adequately address the research questions and to use all means available to understand them (Rossman and Wilson, 1985).

Mixed methods research is a research design that adopts philosophical assumptions to guide the collection, analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. Mixed methods research is based on the premise that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5). The value of qualitative and quantitative research together is that the strengths of both can be combined to develop a deeper understanding of the question than either by itself. Mixed methods are important for research conducted in educational contexts (Myhill et al., 2012). As a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies it is important to focus

attention on the research problem and use pluralistic approaches to develop knowledge about the problem (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Morgan, 2007; Patton 1990). Classroom observation serves both to validate or not data generated via the questionnaires and interviews and to provide qualitative data on the context of grammar teaching.

1.8 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following on from this introduction (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 presents an overview of the literature to date which examines research into teacher beliefs outlining the conceptual framework that underpins the study. The chapter continues with an examination of the limited research literature which addresses beliefs about grammar teaching, with some incorporation of relevant research from the L2 domain, in which this area of investigation is more established. The literature review draws upon bodies of educational and linguistic research because the subject matter is supported by both fields. With a sociocultural approach to this study being applied, Vygotsky's theorising (1978) is drawn upon. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the study, explaining its theoretical underpinnings, the research questions, and how the research questions have been operationalized. Here, the four-phase structure of the study is discussed in detail. It also includes an outline of the ethical guidelines followed for this project. Chapter 4 presents a thematic analysis of the questionnaire responses, interviews and observations relating teachers' perspectives to their pedagogical practice. Chapter 5 discusses the findings, while Chapter 6 offers conclusions and their implications for policy, practice and further research.

1.9 Summary

This introductory chapter has presented the research aims, outlined its methodological characteristics and provided an overview of its contents. While I have chosen the focus for

this research, and the methodology to investigate it, this study is underpinned by distinct theoretical, methodological and substantive arguments. Theoretically, it is grounded in an established body of educational research; methodologically, it draws inspiration from a tradition of both quantitative and qualitative research in education; and substantively, grammar teaching is an issue of recurrent relevance in the field of L2 instruction.

The impetus for this study into the role of grammar in L2 teaching can be summed up as follows:

- One of the most researched aspects of L2 instruction has been formal instruction (Borg, 2003a, 2006). There has been very little input sought from teachers regarding their insights on the relevance of grammar for teaching.
- Educational research has acknowledged an understanding of teachers as autonomous beings whose instructional decisions are heavily influenced by their perspectives on teaching and learning. Research on teaching has begun to look at what teachers actually do in classrooms and on understanding the teachers' reasons for their choices.
- Language is a social exercise of meaning making and interpretation and it is not enough for language learners just to know grammar and vocabulary. Teachers also need to know how language is used to create and represent meanings in different contexts and how to communicate with others and to engage with the communication of others.
- Although teacher cognition research in the field of L2 teaching has increased in recent years, the teaching of grammar has attracted little attention. There is little insight into the reasoning which underlies teachers' practices. In the light of this gap, teachers' perspectives add understanding to grammar teaching. In addition, applying a sociocultural lens offers a further layer of understanding into the second language learning processes.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review examines significant literature on research to date regarding the role knowledge of grammar plays in supporting L2 teaching and learning. It draws on research in both L1 (first language) and L2 teaching to understand whether a knowledge of grammar in a person's first language facilitates the learning of grammar in a second language. The study does not seek to ascertain what type of grammar teaching is most effective but rather the role that it plays. The role that grammar plays in communicative teaching in the Irish context is reviewed as is the relevance of grammar teaching with primary school children. Existent research drawing on the perspectives of teachers is presented in Appendix 4. There is very little in the way of contribution to an understanding of the process of grammar teaching as it is perceived by teachers.

This study draws significantly on Lev Vygotsky who stressed the significance of knowledge of grammar for personal cognitive development and in L2 learning. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that experts in the learning process use tools such as grammar to mediate learning. These tools are psychological because they are used to express thinking and include language signs, symbols, texts (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 53). Cognitive development occurs indirectly when other people interact with the learner and use mediatory tools such as grammar to facilitate the learning process. Vygotsky (1978) also emphasised the significance of interpersonal learning, recognising that any higher mental function is social before it is internal. Cultural tools such as grammar are said to be internalised to become cultural tools for thinking (Rogoff, 1990; Davydov and Radzihovskii, 1985).

According to Vygotsky (1962) language plays two pivotal roles in cognitive development: adults communicate information to children through language; and at about three years of age children's thought and internal speech blend to become one and speech

and thought become interdependent, i.e. thought becomes verbal, speech becomes representational. Development is said to appear on two levels: firstly, on the social level, which Vygotsky called ‘intermental’; and secondly, on the psychological level, which he called ‘intramental’ (Vygotsky, 1962). Knowledge is considered as a social construction (Vygotsky, 1962) and grammar knowledge and meaning are co-constructed and negotiated through dialogue and interaction between people, on the intermental level. There is a direct relationship between collective processes and individual processes. This relationship, which occurs between the social and psychological levels, is called internalisation. The internalisation of language is deemed significant because it drives cognitive development.

2.2 Research paradigm and theoretical position

Understanding the relationship between language and culture is central to the process of learning another language. Sociocultural theory seeks ‘to explicate the relationships between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this functioning occurs, on the other’ (Wertsch, 1995, p. 3). This study draws significantly on elements of sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory has shaped the type of questions asked, informed how data was collected and analysed and provided a call for action or change. A sociocultural approach to this research was chosen as it was considered the most appropriate in my role as a principal teacher exploring the perspectives of other teachers and engaging in dialogue directly via interview and indirectly via questionnaires with teachers to construct their perspectives on the role of English grammar to teach second languages in the Irish context. Furthermore, from a teaching point of view, emphasis is placed on the mediation of teachers’ grammar knowledge and viewing their teaching as a dialogic relationship between themselves and their pupils. Similar to other researchers adopting a sociocultural framework (e.g. Alexander, 2008; Mercer, 2004) perspectives accessed through dialogue contribute to the

meaning making of the role of grammar in second language teaching in the Irish context. This dialogue serves as the primary means of mediation for knowledge construction.

Pragmatics is an area of linguistics which focuses on establishing the meaning of language in context. As well as learning the lexicon and grammar of a language, language learners should know how and when certain forms may be used to communicate specific meanings because there often is not one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning when speaking. The acquisition of pragmatic competence may be challenging for second-language learners because this area of linguistic competence is often very different from their L1. Therefore, aspects of speech which come naturally for L1 learners usually need to be taught explicitly to L2 learners. For this reason Vygotsky (1987) also emphasised the importance of learning diverse speech modes and genres in the course of language learning.

Language is a social and cultural occurrence (Hymes, 1972). This study emphasises the situated nature of knowledge and the complex interdependence of knowledge, action and learning (Collins et al., 1989; Newman et al., 1989; Wertsch, 1985). Sociocultural theory recognises the development of mental processes as they are mediated by their social and contextual influences (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). So grammar knowledge is not just something that exists in teachers' heads to be handed over at school, rather grammar teaching is mediated by other influences, such as teachers' own education, teachers' values. This highlights the mediated nature of human knowledge and the contextualised influence on the construction of this knowledge. As Widdowson (1990, p. 129) states:

the syllabus itself is an inert abstract object ..., a set of bearings for teacher action and not a set of instructions for learner activity. What learners do is not directly determined by the syllabus but is a consequence of how the syllabus is methodologically mediated by the teacher.

Grammar as an element of language ‘always comes fully attached to “other stuff” such as social relations, cultural models, power and politics, perspectives on experience, values and attitudes, as well as things and places in the world’ (Gee, 1996, p. 8). Grammar meaning is learned at the intersection of individuals, culture and activity. This means that understanding any use of grammar to teach second languages should take into account all the elements interacting in that particular sociocultural context which influence what grammar teaching actually is.

Grammar may therefore be defined as ‘the performance of teaching together with the theories, beliefs, policies and controversies that inform and shape it’ (Alexander, 2000, p. 540). Looking at teachers through the sociocultural lens, they are seen as social actors, acting upon the world and creating it at the same time. The social dimension of consciousness is seen as being primary, while the individual dimension is secondary (Vygotsky, 1979). Teachers’ perspectives are informed by their professional experience and training, and how these determine their understanding of grammar teaching is dependent on cultural beliefs which have become engrained in thinking, and enacted in behaviours which are the taken-for-granted ways of a culture. Cultural beliefs are often held tacitly but have been learned from explicit theories. These explicit theories are understood from policy documents, e.g. curriculum. Policy documents and policies are social and political structures that give meaning to educational practices both in the workplace and in educational institutions. Therefore people both shape and are shaped by policies (Ball 2003). The curriculum has been developed by policies:

Some of the elements of grammar are addressed formally in this curriculum, particularly in senior classes. It is envisaged that the child will have gained a knowledge and control of some of the principal elements of grammatical convention by the time he/she finishes primary school. However, it is not intended

that these be taught in isolation. As with punctuation and spelling, they should be approached in the context of general language learning.

(Department of Education and Science, 1999, p. 6)

The focus is the curriculum as it is enacted because curriculum and pedagogy should be linked (Alexander 2000). In this study the curriculum is the manifestation of a policy at the level of the social order. In talking about the ‘social order’, reference is being made to the broader cultural systems of relations and social structures that give meaning to the grammar teaching in which people engage, or that fashion ‘intentional activity in the lived-world’ (Lave, 1988, p. 178).

2.3 Definitions of grammar

From a linguist’s perspective, by studying grammar the structures and rules which underlie the foundation of language are identified and grammar is a tool to talk about language systems. Ellis (2006, p. 84) describes grammar teaching as ‘any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them to understand it either meta-linguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalise it’. From an educationalist perspective, Basturkmen (2012, p.283) defines ‘Focus on form [as] instances during communicative lessons (lessons in which the primary focus is on exchanging messages) when teachers and students attended to issues of linguistic form, such as grammar and vocabulary (including error correction), that arose incidentally and which were thus a relatively unplanned aspect of teaching practice’. Singleton (1992) states that ‘focus on form’ or grammar expression has been applied (e.g. Long, 1988) to ‘procedures whose aim is to ensure students notice targeted features (semantic as well as strictly formal) of the L2 input’. Singleton (1992) rejects the suggestion that such procedures are excluded by a communicative optique (e.g. Gnutzmann and Stark, 1982), and highlights that there is no incompatibility of either

principle or practice between a ‘learner-centred, basically meaning oriented approach to the provision of L2 CI (communicative instruction) and some measure of focus on form in the above sense’ (p. 50). In this study, by grammar I am referring to all the components: phonetics (the production and awareness of sounds); phonology (how sounds are blended); morphology (the study of forms); syntax (how words are linked into sentences); and meaning. While grammar is a static system of arbitrary rules, it is also a dynamic system made up of form, meaning and use (Larsen-Freeman, 1995). Form, meaning and use are components of all languages and so language does not exist without grammar.

2.4 Teachers’ perspectives

Teachers’ perceptions of their knowledge and pedagogical skills play a role in their decision making. Perspectives have been defined by Janesick (1977) as ‘a reflective, socially defined interpretation of experience that serves as a basis for subsequent action ... a combination of beliefs, intentions, interpretations, and behaviour that interact continually’. Beliefs that teachers hold, have developed from their own experience (Pajares, 1992), influencing both their perceptions and judgements and affecting their behaviour in the classroom. Whereas beliefs are opinions with a disposition to act (Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1984), perspectives include both the beliefs teachers have about their work (objectives, curriculum, ideas about children,) and the ways in which the beliefs are reflected in their behaviour within a particular context.

Woods’s case studies (1996) illustrate not only the great effects teacher beliefs have upon practice but also the close interrelationship of beliefs and knowledge. Woods (1996), however, distinguishes between knowledge, referring to it as ‘things we “know” – conventionally accepted facts’, and beliefs, referring to them as ‘an acceptance of a proposition for which there is no conventional knowledge, one that is not demonstrable, and for which there is accepted disagreement’ (p. 195). Despite their differences, most of a

teacher's knowledge could be considered as beliefs (Kagan, 1992). Meijer et al. (2001, p. 446) highlight the futility of trying to separate knowledge, belief and related concepts, because in the teachers' minds these concepts are not separate.

The relationship between propositional knowledge ('knowing what') and practical expertise ('knowing how'), is therefore intricate and it is necessary to understand each kind of knowledge and how each relates to the other to understand either kind of expertise (Winch et al., 2010, p. 2). In line with a sociocultural view, expertise is social and psychological in nature and does not just reside in the individual but also in interaction between the individual and the environment or the context in which they operate.

The implications of this for teachers are that they are no longer viewed as people who master a set of general principles and theories developed by experts (Borg, 2003a; Fang, 1996). Teaching has been conceptualised as a thinking activity through which teachers' own personal, practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983, p. 134) evolves from the subjective meanings of their experiences in different contexts, through their personal histories and reflection. This experience helps teachers to integrate practical and theoretical knowledge and relate these to practice. Teachers' beliefs are generally reflected in their classroom practices (Wong and Barrea-Marlys, 2012; Borg 2011) and pedagogical strategies' (Isikoglu et al., 2009; Arnett and Turnbull, 2008; Borg, 2003a; Johnston and Goettsch, 2000).

Rust (1994) highlights the role of context on mental processes and sees beliefs as being socially constructed. A person's beliefs are what he/she uses to interpret and understand the world. The social locus of cognition has also been the focus of some researchers investigating language learners' perceptions and beliefs. Studies of language teachers' beliefs about how best to teach grammar are presented in Table 2.1 (Appendix 2).

Teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical skills affect how they teach (Bandura 1997). Teachers' self-perceptions of their knowledge of grammar determine their

pedagogical decisions (Borg, 2001; Brumfit et al., 1996). Teachers tend to avoid teaching grammar due to their lack of certainty about their own knowledge (Borg, 2001; Beard, 1999; Grossman et al., 1989). Bell (2016) reported apprehension among teachers in his study due to a lack of certainty in their grammar matter knowledge. He discusses teachers needing assurance in their own knowledge as well as in the knowledge itself. There is a need for subject-matter content knowledge among language teachers which would include grammar-matter content (Shulman, 1986). Grammar-matter content knowledge includes knowledge of substantive structures or the ways in which the principles of the discipline, are organised to incorporate its facts. It also includes syntactic structures of a discipline, or the grammar, in which validity/invalidity is established.

2.5 Grammar teaching and grammatical knowledge

‘Metalinguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies language and its relationship to other cultural behaviours – the study of dialogue relationships between units of speech communication as manifestations and enactments of co-existence’ (Wikipedia, 2015). L1 and L2 grammar teaching has been the focus of vast amounts of research (see Appendix 1). Research on the effects of L1 grammar teaching is presented in Appendix 3.

Chomsky (1965) and Corder (1967) suggest that learners have their own built-in syllabus for learning L1 grammar. This naturalistic L1 acquisition shows that learners appear to follow a natural sequence of acquisition, i.e., they acquire different grammatical structures in a relatively universal order and it involves a fixed sequence of stages of acquisition to master each grammatical structure. Krashen (1981) distinguishes between language learning as knowledge gained consciously and language acquisition as knowledge gained unconsciously and originally argues that grammar instruction does not play a role in acquisition because he believes that learners automatically proceed along a built-in syllabus as long as there is access to comprehensible input. Comprehensible input

refers to language input that can be understood by listeners despite the listeners not understanding all the words and structures in it. While grammar instruction can contribute to learning, it was thought to be of limited value because communicative ability is dependent on acquisition. However, later studies acknowledge that simple rules may be learned explicitly (Krashen, 1982). Schmidt (1990, 1995, 2001), who had originally denied any value in grammar instruction and advocated a zero grammar approach, afterwards conceded that grammar instruction increases the likelihood that learners would have better opportunities to notice how the language works. This is because to acquire language one must notice it and grammar teaching helps with noticing. This is called the Noticing Hypothesis. Ellis (2002b) challenges Krashen's claims (1993), stating that instruction contributes to both acquired knowledge and learned knowledge.

There was a revival in interest in grammar instruction (Hedge, 2000) partly because of the seeming failure of natural contexts of learning (immersion, and Communicative Language Teaching) in producing learners who used language regularly and correctly (Harley et al., 1990; Genesee, 1987). This means that it has been found that merely exposing learners to language in a context they understand may not be enough to promote formal accuracy (Lightbown, 2000; Mitchell, 2000). There is a growing body of research that supports the view that learners need to be directed by teachers towards higher levels of proficiency in the second language (L2) (Ellis, 2006; Mitchell, 2000; Norris and Ortega, 2000; Doughty and Williams, 1998). Widdowson (1990, p. 161) sums this up by stating 'Learners do not very readily infer knowledge of the language system from their communicative activities'. It is now generally accepted that formal instruction may facilitate in some way the process of learning a second language (Van Glederen, 2010; Loewen et al., 2009; Spada and Lightbown, 2008; Azar 2007; Ellis, 2006; Loewen, 2005; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004; Burgess and Etherington, 2002; Ellis et al., 2002; Lightbown and Spada, 1990; Long, 1983). Focus on form (FoF) makes a difference in L2 acquisition

when compared with no FoF (Rama and Agullio, 2012) because ‘there is increasing evidence that learners continue to have difficulty with the basic structures of the language in programs which offer no form-focused instruction’ (Lightbown, and Spada 1993, p. 103). The main difference in opinion lies in agreement about the degree to which grammar should be taught. Where there is agreement is that explicit grammar teaching (Norris and Ortega, 2000) or FoF teaching (Doughty, 2001) has to be combined with modifications in input and interaction to improve competence levels (Rama and Agullio 2012). These modifications in input can take the form of grammar instruction.

Therefore, in response to the apparent need to highlight grammatical features used in context, Long (1991) offers the following definition: ‘Focus on form (FoF) ... overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication’ (pp. 45–6; cited in Ellis et al., 2001). FoF is in contrast to focus on forms (FoFs), which describe a more traditional type of grammar teaching where the focus is on decontextualised grammar lessons. Ellis (2001) states that students using a FoFs approach view themselves as learners of a language and in this case language is viewed as the object of study. On the other hand, a FoF approach views learners as language users and language is viewed as a tool for communication and interaction. It has been recognised that FoF is not about ‘agglutination’ (Larsen-Freeman, (1991, p. 253), i.e. gathering structural entities one at a time (Rutherford, 1987). Doughty and Williams (1998, p. 3) indicate that the FoF approach provides learners with an advantage over FoFs teaching through the ‘cognitive processing support provided by the overriding focus on meaning or communication’ because ‘the learners’ attention is drawn precisely to a linguistic feature as necessitated by a communicative demand’. The main principle of FoF instruction is that ‘meaning and use must already be evident to the learner at the time that attention is drawn to the linguistic apparatus needed to get the meaning across’ (Doughty and Williams, 1998, p. 4).

Savignon (2002) highlights the difference between communicative competence and communicative ability. Teachers who do not know grammar may not be able to deliver FoF instruction. Although they can fulfil their role in fostering communicative competence, which is a feature of a language user's knowledge of the language that allows the user to know 'when, where, and how to use language appropriately' (Díaz-Rico and Weed, 2010, p. 58), communicative ability (the ability to comprehend meaning and use form appropriately) is reduced. Grammatical competence is one of four areas of the communicative competence theory put forward by Canale and Swain (1980). The four areas function together in language production (Lyster, 1996). Grammatical competence stresses command of the language code, including such things as the rules of word and sentence formation, meanings, spelling and pronunciation (Gao, 2001). The goal is to acquire knowledge of and ability to use forms of expression that are grammatically correct and accurate (Díaz-Rico and Weed, 2010; Gao, 2001). Díaz-Rico and Weed (2010) imply that 'this type of competence focuses on the skills and knowledge necessary to speak and write accurately, and becomes increasingly important to the English learner in more advanced stages of proficiency' (p. 58).

2.6 Declarative versus procedural knowledge

The aim of grammar learning is to attain what Myhill (2005, p. 78) has referred to as 'the pedagogical conceptualisation of Grammar'. Researchers have agreed on three consecutive stages of development in grammar learning. Anderson (1995) calls them declarative, procedural and automatic. They have also been referred to as cognitive, associative and autonomous (Fitts and Posner, 1967) and presentation, practice and production (Byrne, 1986). Declarative grammar knowledge refers to knowledge that supports the understanding of grammar concepts and knowledge. Procedural grammar knowledge means knowledge that supports carrying out a task. Declarative knowledge has to be

present in order for procedural knowledge to develop. Declarative grammar knowledge is learned by observing others who operationalise it or by listening to information about grammar. The next stage involves declarative knowledge being converted into procedural knowledge, a task that can be accomplished if declarative knowledge is available and the person knows how to apply it. Skill Acquisition Theory (DeKeyser, 2007) postulates that the learning of skills, such as grammar in language learning, involves the transformation of declarative, explicit, knowledge into procedural, implicit, knowledge. With repeated grammar practise, the eliciting of spontaneous grammar practise is attained. Both psychologists (e.g. Anderson, 1995) and applied linguists (e.g. DeKeyser, 1997) state that only a relatively small amount of grammar practise is required for proceduralisation. The value of proceduralised grammar knowledge over declarative grammar knowledge is that it is available as ‘a ready made chunk to be called up in its entirety each time the conditions for that behaviour are met’ (DeKeyser 2007, p. 98).

In order for procedural grammar knowledge to be readily available, learners need sufficient practise which lessens the reaction time, decreases the mistakes and minimises interference from other tasks. Practising facilitates restructuring of declarative knowledge by assembling the basic parts into larger amounts of knowledge that reduce the demands on memory resources. Extended practise has to be communicative in nature and facilitate practise in realistic circumstances; this leads to the automatising of procedural knowledge. As DeKeyser (1998, p. 49) comments, ‘strengthening, fine-tuning, and automatization of the newly acquired procedural knowledge are then a function of the amount of practice, which increases speed and reduces the error rate and the demand on cognitive resources’. Johnson (1996) applies Skill Acquisition Theory to language teaching in the proposal that combined form-focused and meaning-focused practise leads to the development of implicit target language knowledge.

2.7 Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is fundamentally concerned with semantics and ‘making meaning’ in the language, by conveying one’s message, inferring someone else’s or negotiating when meaning is unclear (Musumeci, 1997). However, Savignon, a well-known supporter of CLT, highlights the value of attention to form in language pedagogy and suggests that ‘[...] communicative language teaching does not exclude a focus on metalinguistic awareness or knowledge of the rules of syntax’ (2005, p. 645). Spada (2007, p. 275) declares the thought that ‘Communicative Language Teaching means an exclusive focus on meaning’ a myth or a misconception. Van Patten et al. (2004) emphasise that establishing connections between form and meaning is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition because any reference to grammar that does not describe the form-meaning connections of the target language has to be inadequate. Larsen-Freeman (2001) highlights how attention needs to be given to the three dimensions of grammar: form, meaning and use. Linking form, meaning and use implies that grammar should be taught in context (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011, pp. 11–12).

CLT approaches encourage the use and exchange of realistic messages in order to present language features (Grim, 2008). There is still a strong emphasis on grammar because CLT syllabuses are organised to correspond with functions (Thornbury, 1999). CLT or the communicative approach links grammar to meaning and use in the Irish context as well as emphasising interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study.

According to Widdowson (2007), the development of CLT was inspired from changes in orientation in linguistics, and the conceptualisation of CLT evolved from Hymes’s formulation of communicative competence (1972). Hymes (1972) defines ‘communicative competence’ as a knowledge of the rules for understanding and producing both the referential and social meaning of language. Applying a sociocultural lens, both research and pedagogy do not focus on isolated linguistic structures or rules of use, but

rather typically focus on the learner's language use in its cultural context. Hymes (1972) distinguishes between 'linguistic competence' that refers to the ability to produce and understand grammatically correct sentences, and 'communicative competence' that refers to the ability to produce and understand sentences that are satisfactory and appropriate to a particular situation.

Close to Hymes's position on language learning (1972) are Widdowson's views on language learning (1983), which are not merely about acquiring the knowledge of the rules of grammar but also about acquiring the ability to use language to communicate. He says that knowing a language is more than how to understand, speak, read, and write sentences, but how sentences are used to communicate.

Widdowson (1983) seems to share Hymes's thought (1972) that children acquire the knowledge not only of grammar but also of sociocultural rules, such as when to speak, when not to speak, what to talk about to whom and in what manner, at the same time as they acquire knowledge of grammatical rules. Widdowson (1983) emphasises teaching communicative competence along with linguistic competence, distinguishing two elements of communication: 'usage' and 'use'. 'Usage' refers to the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules, whereas 'use' refers to the extent to which the language user demonstrates their ability to use their knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication.

Thus acquisition of linguistic competence is involved in use. Widdowson (1990) suggests that classroom language presentation must promote both kinds of competence by providing linguistic and communicative contexts. Linguistic context promotes usage to enable students to select which form of sentence is appropriate in that context, while communicative context promotes use to enable students to recognise the type of communicative function their sentences fulfil.

Canale and Swain's work (1980) highlighted the interaction of grammar, social meaning and social context. They state that the study of grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence is vital to the study of communicative competence. Azar (2007) declares that grammar teaching and communicative language teaching is a hybrid that works, and highlights how fluency and accuracy are different sides of the same coin. This is because the goal of language teaching is to create an interlanguage (i.e. an emerging language system in the mind of a L2 learner) that is increasingly fluent and accurate, in the use of language structures, while engaging in meaningful communication. This echoes the post-Krashen view that while conscious attention to form may after all be essential, it will only lead to acquisition if it overlaps with communicative use of language. The implications are therefore that it is more effective to study grammar for effective communication so that grammar facilitates communication experiences. Swan (2005) advocates that learners should learn the structural features of language because experience and understanding of these features are necessary for communication.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) influenced a shift towards a stronger emphasis on language instruction by relating the way people use language (its function) with the grammar (the form) they require to communicate. Lantolf and Thorne (2006, pp. 9–14) highlight how meaning and form are inseparable because they are mutually constituted and dependent dialectically on one another. Language is a system of conventions which enables individuals to fulfil their communicative needs and to create conceptual meaning: i.e. meaning is created by humans through its use. Hymes (1972), Halliday (1997) and Austin (2001) balanced function and form. Their views on grammar are semantic and functional because 'grammar is the study of linguistic forms realizing functions or meanings' (Bloor, 2004, p. 2). Grammar is situated within a theory of language which is focused on the social; thus for Halliday (1975) the aim of language is to understand words and meanings and to interact with others effectively. Grammar is a way

towards both presentation and attainment of non-linguistic contents and is a method of acquiring communicative skills. Leont'ev (1978), a peer of Vygotsky, states that individuals appropriate cultural tools to their own activity. Grammar, then, can be seen as a sociocultural tool or meaning-making tool which is used when there is a communicative need to make a meaning clear. The study of grammar includes concepts of functions, meanings and communication. Sociocultural linguists, such as Halliday (1994), view language as a tool for expressing meaning and so they categorise language in terms of how meaning is expressed and produce functional grammar in communicative language teaching. Functional grammar is oriented to how meaning is made. It is designed as a way into exploring how different choices of words create different meanings and together build up different texts to achieve diverse social purposes. In line with a sociocultural perspective, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is able to relate grammatical knowledge with knowledge of the whole texts and their structure. This is one of the strongest arguments for its potential as a resource for children's learning – it is designed to relate the sentence level to the whole text level or to relate grammar with achievement of social purposes. In summary, SFG is a meaning-making resource situated within a theory of language which is focused on the social.

Williams (2005) declares that studying grammar through a functional description is likely to lead to a different kind of awareness of grammar and its use from that produced by a description of, e.g. parts of speech. For Celce-Murcia (1991, p. 466): 'Grammar is a tool or resource to be used in the comprehension and creation of oral and written discourse rather than something to be learned as an end in itself.'

Metalinguistic awareness refers to the ability to see language as an object of thought and in the case of bilinguals to analyse each language in relation to the other. Lasagabaster (2000) suggests that the presence of up to three languages in the curriculum of Irish primary schools should not be regarded as an impediment for pupils, but rather as

an advantage in fostering highly developed metalinguistic awareness, which fosters greater competence in all languages taught. Cummin's interdependence hypothesis (1978) states that a learner's competence in their second language is partly dependent on the level of competence achieved in their first language and therefore indicates that when children develop literacy skills in Irish, English or another language, they are not just developing those skills in that particular language but, in fact, they are also developing a common underlying proficiency that supports the transfer of literacy skills and learning strategies to additional languages. This means that a strong cognitive understanding in their first language will facilitate a student learning and extending their knowledge in their second language, i.e. the proficiency of content and skills gained in a person's first language such as grammar, transfer to the second language. Ó'Laoire et al. (2000) concur with this, showing evidence that indicates that learners 'consciously or subconsciously draw on various sources of previous language learning in all subsequent language learning' (p. 53). This corresponds to the idea of a Universal Grammar (Chomsky 1965) which states that all languages are based upon the same principles. Dean (2004) and Keith (2001) state that within L1 education, active grammar knowledge is indispensable and it needs to be taught in the classroom in order to bring students to the necessary standard. Vygotsky (1962) has stated that children who have the ability to express the same thought in other languages will be able to 'see their language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations' (p. 110). It seems, therefore, that children should be taught grammar in their first language as it impacts not only on the first language but also on subsequent language learning, which, in Ireland, represents a significant proportion of their primary schooling. In addition, it is through using grammatical rules in L2 grammars, through contrastive analysis and descriptions of basic contexts of use that it can be explained why words in sentences create meaning differently in different languages.

2.8 The educationalist's perspective

The sociocultural view of education emphasises conceptual development as being at the core of instructed L2 learning. From a teaching/learning perspective, metalinguistic knowledge and metalanguage terms (concepts to explain language) and grammatical rules (language to describe regularities in morpho syntax and language use) are helpful for classifying words in a language and for describing basic functions of linguistic features. Van Oers (1996) declares that the classification of words by descriptive features may not be language in its essence but it is beneficial in promoting understanding of words and grammatical relationships. Negueruela Azarola (2003) argues that grammar and metalanguage terms should become more than just language to describe or teach language to learners in L2 classrooms. Grammar is the way to think about language through language; it can be a functional knowledge for L2 learners. By this he means that it supports the learning of grammatical rules and metalinguistic terms in the L2 classroom and from a conceptual perspective promotes L2 development. Vygotsky (1962) highlighted that the goal of teaching metalinguistic knowledge in the L2 classroom is also in promoting the development of conceptual categories. Conceptual development of metalinguistic knowledge involves transforming explicit knowledge into conceptual categories for thinking and communicating. Communication and conceptualisation come together through verbal thinking. The activity of thinking and the activity of communicating occur together in meaningful pedagogical tasks in the L2 classroom. Negueruela Azarola (2003) cautions that the L2 classroom instruction based on random representations of grammatical knowledge or lack of properly organised and guided conceptual reflection by learners does not lead to the development of clear and complete conceptual understandings. Nassaji and Fotos's review of current approaches to grammar (2011) found that none of the approaches used in their comprehensive treatment of grammar in the classroom included a conceptual understanding of grammar. From a sociocultural perspective the quality of explanations

and their precise presentation and application by learners is at the crux of the matter (Kozulin, 1998).

Grammatical rules may provide additional structure to learning any language, both foreign language teaching and L2 teaching (Van Vooren et al., 2012). Cummins (1979) emphasises the importance of learning the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which is the social language that is used in everyday conversation. When speaking, grammar can be used freely without necessarily needing to understand it. However, there is a critical need for English learners to acquire academic language, the dimension of language that is not automatically developed but must be taught (Hakuta, 2001; Cummins 1984). Teaching discrete language skills such as grammar at the beginning of language instruction may be a bridge to developing academic language (Cummins 2000). Cummins (1984) called this academic language Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). CALP incorporates the vocabulary and way of speaking that is employed in formal and academic school environments (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 2010, p. 56). Ellis (1999, p. 30) highlights how prescriptive grammars ‘are the stuff of high school English teachers. They “prescribe,” like medicine for what ails you, how you “ought” to speak’. These are in contrast to descriptive grammars, which are essentially scientific theories that attempt to explain how language works. The intent of descriptive grammar is to suggest explanations for the facts of language use, and there is no assumption of correctness or appropriateness. Theorists such as Chomsky and Pinker have rejected the idea that the capacity to learn how to speak and understand speech is taught. This suggests that children who come to a school speaking different dialects or with regional accents do not have inferior language. However, it has been found that social background and children’s communication skills are reliable predictors of children’s performance at school. Brown and her colleagues (1994) led an investigation into communication between 500 Scottish schoolchildren (14- to 17-year-olds) and their teachers. They found that 300 of the

children were deemed by their schools to be in the weaker 33% of pupils in their year in terms of academic ability. A distinction was made between what the researchers termed ‘chat’ (informal) and ‘information-giving speech’ (more formal). The study reported that academically less-able pupils were weak at using speech for information-giving purposes. They discovered that these pupils were usually incapable of providing coherent, comprehensive, explanatory narratives. In contrast, when the children were observed chatting to each other in pairs, the pupils were talkative and seemed not to have difficulty in communicating. The findings in relation to informal language were consistent with Chomsky’s theory of the innateness of language acquisition while the findings on ‘information-giving speech’ highlighted the difficulties caused by the differences between children’s everyday experience of language and the use of language in schools. Language in schools needs to be learned.

2.9 The linguist’s perspective

2.9.1 FoF to accelerate learning

It has been strongly suggested that there are speed advantages for learners who receive formal instruction. Long (1983) concluded that instruction effects acquisition when he reviewed 11 relevant studies, 6 of which clearly showed faster development in children and adults who received English as a second language learning (ESL) instruction. Long (1983) also claimed that his conclusion challenges Krashen’s theory (1981) that languages are acquired rather than learned.

Krashen (1985) maintained that Long’s findings (1983) are not the result of instruction but simply highlight the classroom as a positive source of comprehensible input for beginners which is lacking in the natural environment. When Long (1983) mentioned that the studies also involved advanced learners, Krashen (1985) argued by saying that subjects in some of the studies had been wrongly classified as intermediate and advanced.

However, findings of a study by Pica (1985) also suggest that formal grammar instruction facilitates learning. Pica (1985) compared three groups of learners: a natural group (no grammar teaching), a mixed group and an instructed group which used a number of grammatical morphemes in spontaneous speech. The outcome was that the instructed group performed 's' plurals more accurately than the naturalistic group. Ellis (1989) compared the sequence of classroom acquisition of German word order rules and that reported for naturalistic learners and his findings suggested that there were no differences in the sequence of acquisition. However, the comparison suggested that the classroom learners achieved a higher level of acquisition in a shorter length of time. Ellis (1989) therefore concludes that classroom learners may learn more rapidly. Lightbown and Spada (1990) observed four communicative classrooms and later compared the performance of those learners in unplanned language samples. In their observations they found that teachers spent different lengths of time on formal instruction and were almost always 'reactive' to questions or grammatical problems (i.e. they only gave an explanation when necessary). In the unplanned oral samples, they found that learners who received the most FoF instruction had the highest accuracy in using the progressive 'ing', and were more likely to use the native speaker preferred form of presentational: 'there is' rather than 'you have'. Lightbown and Spada's interpretation of their findings is that form focus instruction and corrective feedback can contribute in a positive manner to the development of L2 acquisition. Research evidence by Pienemann (1985) shows that although unmotivated learners may not achieve a higher degree of accuracy, motivated ones can increase their accuracy. This means that when a learner has begun to reach a certain stage, the process of going through that stage can be accelerated. It is at this stage that formal instruction can help the learner.

Studies in what are esteemed to be 'good learners' by Rubin (1975) also substantiates this view. Rubin (1975) studied mixed ages in a classroom setting and found

that paying attention to forms and monitoring one's own and other people's language were important approaches adopted by good learners. This finding is supported by studies such as Reiss (1985) and Naiman et al. (1978)

FoF instruction is supported by both educationalists and applied linguists who share the belief that grammar learning leads to greater precision and accelerates the process of language acquisition. As previously mentioned, Widdowson (1990) questions the effectiveness of naturalistic learning to language teaching over teaching which includes form focused instruction. This is because during communication attention is focused on meaning. This means that learners 'acquire a fairly patchy and imperfect repertoire of performance which is not supported by an underlying competence' (p. 161). He argues that the process of gaining competence in natural learning among children, on which Krashen (1981) bases his argument, takes an excessively long time and that it is therefore not realistic to replicate a naturalistic environment. He esteems this to be an inefficient use of time which no course can afford to provide and it does not make sense to emulate it. Therefore, it does not make sense to try it because 'the whole point of pedagogy is that it is a way of short circuiting the slow process of natural discovery and can make arrangements for learning to happen more easily and more efficiently than it does in "natural surroundings"' (Widdowson, 1990, p. 162).

FoF makes a difference in L2 acquisition when compared with situations where there is no FoF (Rama and Agullio, 2012). There have been a number of studies which have compared learners' language development in CLT without FoF to that which is achieved in CLT with FoF (Doughty and Varela, 1998; Lyster, 1994; Lightbown and Spada, 1990; Harley, 1989). Results have provided strong support for inclusion of FoF in CLT classrooms. There are speed advantages for learners who receive formal instruction (Long, 1983). Long (1983) compared the success of instructed and naturalistic learners and White et al. (1991) examined whether teaching specific grammatical structures resulted in their

acquisition. It was found that while the order of acquisition is the same for instructed and naturalistic learners, that instructed learners generally achieved higher levels of grammatical competence than naturalistic learners. These results were interpreted as demonstrating that the acquisitional processes of instructed and naturalistic learning were the same but that instructed learners progressed more rapidly and achieved higher levels of proficiency. It was found therefore that teaching grammar was beneficial but Long (1988) highlighted that to be effective, grammar had to be taught in a way that was compatible with the natural processes of acquisition. Spada and Lightbown (1999) indicate that even if learners are not ready to learn a certain structure, intensive grammar teaching can help them advance through the sequence of stages involved in the acquisition of that structure. Intensive instruction also helps to address any incorrect use of language structures by language learners so that they may use structures they have partially acquired more accurately (e.g. White et al., 1991). Harley (1989) found that Anglophone learners of L2 French failed to distinguish between the simple past tense and the imperfect past tenses after hours of naturalistic exposure in an immersion programme. However, after intensive instruction they were able to distinguish between the two tenses and use them more correctly.

Input enhancement is the term adopted by Sharwood Smith (1991) when referring to methods language teachers use to clarify details of a second language for students. Ellis (1997) advocates that it may be more effective teaching of grammatical structures to carefully organise the input. He calls this ‘intake-facilitation’. He also promotes ‘conscious-raising tasks’ (Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith, 1985) as a complement to intake-facilitation. By consciousness-raising, the teacher relates the new grammatical structure to other grammatical information that pupils may already have. By provoking consciousness-raising in the learners they use the knowledge they already have, so the new grammar is familiar to the learner. This information may relate to other L2 grammatical

concepts or it may relate to grammatical information which pertains in pupils' L1. Studies conducted in French immersion and intensive English programmes in Canada suggest that some kind of input enhancement (Sharwood Smith 1991, 1993; White et al., 1991) can bring about positive effects on the L2 proficiency of older children in grades 4–8 (from 9 to 13 years of age) (Lyster, 1994; Day and Shapson, 1991; White et al., 1991; Harley, 1989). These studies have all emphasised both using and understanding L2 in communicative activities in age-appropriate activities.

FoF facilitates explicit learning through rule explanation, as well as the possibility of implicit learning through the learner's exposure to examples of meaning and usage. Learners can eventually turn an explicit rule into implicit knowledge of how to use the form (Sharwood Smith, 1981). It improves learners' proficiency and precision over what normally happens when there is no FoF (Cullen, 2008; Ellis, 2006; Williams, 2005; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004; Mitchell, 2000; Norris and Ortega, 2000; Doughty and Williams, 1998; Larsen-Freeman, 1995). While FoF does not necessarily produce immediate mastery of target structures, instruction increases the likelihood that learners will have better opportunities to notice how the language works (Schmidt 1990, 1994b). Schmidt and Frota (1986) put forward the idea of noticing the gap, which refers to the learner noticing the difference between what they are using in output and what is the correct form in the target language. Schmidt (1990) put forward the noticing hypothesis which states that in order for the learning to take place, learners must attend to and notice the difference between their interlanguage and the target language. In grammar teaching, teachers can intervene to increase the input and output and enhance the saliency of problematic linguistic features which is required to destabilise learners' interlanguage (Ellis, 2006). The teacher's role is to help with the linguistic features to enable learners to get back on track. Without FoF, weaker learners will have trouble attending to form and meaning and they will favour meaning over form when doing communicative activities (Van Patten, 2002). Van Patten et

al. (2004) declare that establishing connections between form and meaning is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition and that any reference to grammar which fails to link the form-meaning connections of the language has to be inadequate.

FoF heightens learners' awareness to enable further noticing and analysis of the target structures in subsequent input. The nature of FoF as learner-centred allows for a non-linear learning process to take place in the L2 classroom, and for individual learners to progress according to a developmental sequence that is not necessarily in step with explicit instruction. FoF on linguistic features to weaken learners' interlanguage (Ellis, 2006) becomes even more significant 'when learners have acquired some communicative ability and when they run the risk of fossilizing' (Ellis, 2003, p. 78). Fossilisation means when an error is made so often that it has become a natural part of the person's speech (Selinker, 1972). Instruction helps to prevent fossilisation and helps learners to achieve higher levels of accuracy than they might not otherwise have done (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011).

Long (1991, 1997) and Long and Crookes (1992) contend that FoF instruction is likely to be more effective because it is consistent with what L2 researchers know about how second languages are acquired. By this they mean grammatical features in a language have a fixed sequence of development. Even if learners are not ready to learn the grammar structure, intensive grammar teaching may facilitate pupils in progressing through the sequence of stages involved in the acquisition of certain structures (Spada and Lightbown, 1999). Carol Chomsky (1969) highlighted that native English speakers were still in the process of developing certain grammatical structures in English well into adolescence. Table 2.1 presents arguments supporting the effectiveness of teaching grammar.

Meta-analysis studies to date bear overall support for FoF. A summary of the outcomes is found in Table 2.2.

Table 2.1 Arguments for focus on form

Arguments for focus on form	
1.	Establishing links between form and meaning is an essential aspect of language acquisition (Van Patten et al., 2004).
2.	FoF facilitates learning to happen more readily than it would in natural surroundings. (Widdowson, 1990, p. 161). FoF improves learners' accuracy and proficiency over what normally happens when there is no FoF (Cullen, 2008; Ellis, 2006; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004; Norris and Ortega, 2000; Mitchell, 2000; Doughty and Williams, 1998; Larsen-Freeman, 1995).
3.	FoF allows for both explicit learning through rule explanation, as well as the possibility of implicit learning through the learner's exposure to examples of meaning and usage. Learners can eventually turn an explicit rule into implicit knowledge of how to use the form (Sharwood Smith, 1981).
4.	FoF heightens learners' awareness to facilitate further noticing and analysis of the grammatical structures in subsequent input (Shak and Gardner, 2008).
5.	The learners' attention is drawn precisely to a linguistic feature because it is necessary to fulfil a communicative demand (Doughty and Williams, 1998a).
6.	Without FoF, weaker learners often have difficulty in attending to form and meaning at the same time and so they prioritise meaning over form during communicative activities (VanPatten, 2002a).
7.	While FoF does not necessarily produce immediate mastery of target structures, instruction increases the likelihood that learners will have better opportunities to notice how the language works (Schmidt, 1990, 1994b).
8.	FoF on linguistic features to weaken learners' interlanguage (Ellis, 2006) becomes even more significant 'when learners have acquired some communicative ability and when they run the risk of fossilizing' (Ellis, 2003, p. 78).
9.	Instruction helps to prevent fossilisation and helps learners to achieve higher levels of accuracy than they might otherwise have done (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011).

10. FoF makes a difference in L2 acquisition when compared with no focus (Rama and Agullio, 2012) and there are rate advantages for learners who receive formal instruction (Long, 1983).
11. FoF instruction is likely to be more effective because it is consistent with what L2 researchers know about how second languages are acquired (Long, 1991, 1997; Long and Crookes, 1992).
12. Results of studies that have compared learners' language development in CLT without FoF to that which is achieved in CLT with FoF (Doughty and Varela, 1998; Lyster, 1994; Lightbown and Spada, 1990; Harley, 1989) provide strong support for inclusion of FoF in CLT classrooms.
13. Instructed learners generally achieved higher levels of grammatical competence than naturalistic learners (Long, 1983; Pica, 1983).

Table 2.2 Meta-analysis studies to date

Meta-analysis studies	Details	Outcomes
Norris and Ortega (2001)	49 studies noted the overall effectiveness of grammar teaching	Grammar teaching was effective.
Spada and Tomita (2010)	41 studies of learners of English as a second or foreign language	Results showed that explicit instruction created larger effect sizes, and this is regardless of the specific structures taught.
Nassaji and Fotos (2011)	Review of current approaches to grammar	Found that none of the approaches used in their comprehensive treatment of grammar in the classroom included a conceptual understanding of grammar.

Spada and Tomita (2010) provide a more recent meta-analysis study than that of Norris and Ortega (2001). It included 41 studies of learners of English as a second or foreign language and it also had a greater focus on how different types of structures interact with different types of instruction. The findings indicate that very complex rules are sometimes thought to be too complicated to learn explicitly, and so may be better learned implicitly. In contrast, simple rules may be easily learned explicitly (Krashen, 1982). Of the studies done, 90% were with post-puberty learners (the studies are listed by treatment, not by age group). The findings demonstrate that explicit instruction may create larger effect sizes than implicit instruction. This was true regardless of whether the forms were complex or simple. The studies that were included also used more freeform response measures than Norris and Ortega's sample (2001) and more explicit instruction, which appeared to benefit learners' performance – even though learners would have had less opportunity to apply explicit knowledge on freeform, time-pressured tasks. Spada and Tomita (2010) concluded that although implicit interventions produce small to medium effect sizes, explicit interventions produce large effect sizes – regardless of the specific structures taught.

2.10 Grammar and primary children

Metalinguistic knowledge is the ability to see language as an object of thought and in the case of bilingual learners to analyse each language in relation to the other. Metalinguistic awareness is defined as the ability to reflect upon and manipulate the structural features of spoken language, treating language itself as an object of thought as opposed to simply using the language system to comprehend and produce sentences (Tunmer and Herriman, 1984, p. 12).

An individual's level of metalinguistic awareness impacts positively on explicit learning and facilitates L2 learning (Roehr and Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2013). Ellis (1994)

highlights that explicit metalinguistic knowledge can facilitate the acquisition of implicit knowledge by focusing learners' attention on linguistic features in the input. Learners develop the ability to use those features if they are developmentally ready to do so (Lightbown and Spada, 1993).

Despite the assumption that young learners' metalinguistic abilities are not adequately developed for them to reflect on how their L1 contributes to their L2 understanding and enactment (Ammar et al., 2010), it has been argued that young children develop metalinguistic awareness from the age of 4 onwards (Milton and Alexiou, 2006) and are able to express it (Gaux and Gombert, 1999; Gleitman et al., 1972). Research indicates that children can and do reflect on the role that their L1 plays in their L2 development. This has been demonstrated in studies carried out with young children learning second languages in Europe (Hawkins, 1984) and with children learning French in immersion programmes (e.g. Harley, 1998) and English in intensive ESL programmes in Canada (White and Ranta, 2002). It has been noted that children learn language successfully regardless of ability (Dekeyser, 2000; Harley and Hart, 1997). Children have been said to either never notice structure (Dekeyser, 2000) or constantly notice structure (Schmidt, 1990). Lichtman (2012) tested adults and 40 children (5- to 7-year-olds) on implicit and explicit learning of an artificial mini-language. Consistent with previous research, verbal ability may be more important for adults than for children in learning L2 grammar. However, in contrast to previous literature, both adults and children are capable of implicit and explicit learning, and noticing grammatical structure improves the performance of both groups. Their grammatical knowledge enabled concise control of writing and critical understanding of reading, improved express reading aloud, and improved punctuation of direct speech.

Hakes (1980) worked with young English children (aged 4–8). Children were tested in short sessions over a week on judgements of synonymy (words meaning the same) and

acceptability in sentences, and also on their ability to divide words phonemically.

Synonymy and acceptability are considered to play an important role in the linguistic competence of adults. Pinto et al. (1999) built on Hakes's work (1960) and developed three measures of metalinguistic ability for L1 Italian speakers which was later adapted for L1 speakers of English.

Bouffard and Sarkar (2008) developed teaching skills that enabled young learners (8-year-olds) to develop their metalinguistic awareness. Their research findings suggested that the young learners were able to negotiate form and to analyse their grammatical errors. Ellis's reviews of studies (2002, p. 229) show FoF's positive effect on L2 acquisition for children aged 12 or below. These studies suggest that attention to form in L2 teaching is needed to eliminate problems with basic structures. Ellis (2002) cites Harley's 319 Grade 6 early French immersion students study (1989) and Day and Shapson's 315 Grade 7 early French immersion students study (1991) to support an emphasis on FoF. In a follow-up study with 111 Grade 2 French immersion students, Harley (1998) stated that noticing activities facilitated the learning of grammatical gender of high-frequency words used. Harley (1998) emphasises the importance in finding an appropriate means to help young learners achieve linguistic accuracy in communicative language classrooms because without attention to form, children may have problems with basic L2 structures. Explicit learning is believed to influence the achievement of L2 proficiency in the classroom (Larson-Hall, 2008; De Keyser 2003).

Naturalistic settings are settings in which no formal instruction is given to children, rather they are allowed to learn inductively. With regard to L2 acquisition in naturalistic situations, Krashen et al. (1979) reported that in the initial stages of learning, older beginners (adults and older children) tend to perform better than younger children. However, the 'Consensus view' (Ellis 1994; Cook 1991; Long 1990; Harley 1986), so

named by Singleton (1992), suggests that regarding long-term outcomes in language teaching, it is better to have earlier exposure to the target language.

Scarcella and Higa (1982) have challenged Krashen's theory by saying that younger acquirers receive 'simpler' input in a block building task. Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975) confirm that this in fact foretells greater speed for younger not older acquirers. Singleton (1989, 1992) broadened Krashen et al.'s position (1979) to include the case of normal L2 learning, on the understanding that long-term benefits of an early start will depend on appropriate articulation between earlier and later learning, on continuing contact with the L2, and on a broadly positive set of classroom experiences of the L2. He has suggested that given the differences in density of L2 experience, this initial advantage of older learners, which in naturalistic settings appears to last about a year, may, in the context of much less exposure to the L2 in classroom settings, last for many years. It has been assumed that the acquisition of language by young children happens incidentally as a result of communication, without any effort on their part to learn the language or to master it (Schmidt 1990; 1994b). According to Schmidt (1994b), however, this does not mean that children's language learning occurs without any kind of conscious awareness. He points out that 'target language forms will not be acquired unless they are noticed and that one important way in which instruction works is by increasing the salience of target language forms in input so that they are more likely to be noticed by learners' (Schmidt, 1994b, p. 195). Harley (1979) states that this principle is equally applicable to L2 learning of children as well as adults. Schmidt (1994a, 1994b) states that learning at any age depends on the ability to notice the relevant language features. Long (1990) showed that younger children have a phonological advantage over older ones in second language learning. Harley found that grade 2 students (aged 7–8) who received gender instruction, outperformed pupils who had not received this grammatical instruction. While they were not able to generalise this knowledge about noun endings to unfamiliar nouns, Harley

(1979, p. 169) states that they engaged in 'item' rather than 'system' learning. She found, therefore, that 'the use of L2 tasks requiring close attention to formal features is both feasible and helpful even with young children' (p. 169). She emphasised that the tasks provided the kind of noticeable L2 input, along with opportunities for output and associated feedback that was needed to direct students' attention to grammatical gender. The fact that the pupils made long-lasting progress in the accuracy of gender attributes is evidence that the activities had a positive result. Ceci and Howe (1982) found that attention is dependent on the intrinsic interest of the learning activity involved.

Younger children follow a different order of acquisition in some areas of grammar (Dimroth, 2008). They rely more on imitation skills and repetition. Cameron (2015) stresses how grammar has a place in children's L2 learning because it is more than just lists and labels. Grammar is tied into meaning and use of language and is interconnected with vocabulary. Cameron (2015) argues that children need to participate in meaningful discourse in second languages, and while it is not conceptually appropriate for grammar to be explicitly taught as formal explicit rules to children under the age of 8, form-focusing techniques need to be employed so that learning opportunities are used when they arise. In other words, when learners need grammar to progress their language learning and teachers draw the children's attention – even the youngest of children – to the grammatical features of stories in informal ways. As children get older they can more easily comprehend formal grammar instruction.

Cameron (2015, p. 98) highlights how:

- Grammar is necessary to express precise meanings in discourse.
- Grammar ties closely into vocabulary in learning and using the foreign language.
- Grammar learning can result from learning the chunks of language.
- Talking about something of importance to the child can be a useful way to introduce new grammar.

- Grammar can be taught without formal terminology.

Cameron (2015) recommends the most effective way to give children a firm basis in using the language while encouraging curiosity and to talk about language in terms of contrasts in and between languages and introducing grammatical metalanguage slowly and meaningfully. A grammar-sensitive teacher will see the language patterns that occur in tasks, stories, songs, rhymes and classroom talk and will have a range of techniques to bring these patterns to the children's notice and to organise meaningful practise. This would require considerable knowledge and teaching skills. Research suggests that older children (from 9–10 onwards) are increasingly able to reflect on their learning and assess their own performance (Butler and Lee 2006; Lan and Oxford 2003) while younger children are less able to reflect (Gu et al., 2005). Young learners emotional needs are greater than older learners (Heining-Boynton and Haitema, 2007; Nassaji and Cumming, 2000; Nikolov, 1999) but for all learners their teachers represent powerful sources of influence. Children change quickly (Cekaite, 2007) and they exhibit a great deal of individual variability, not just in terms of their patterns of development but also in terms of their personality, motivation and interests (Wong-Fillmore, 1983). This requires knowledge and teaching skills. Cameron (2015, p. 110) highlights how the sociocultural context will influence what happens in the classroom, but some general principles for learner-centred grammar teaching are:

- Grammatical accuracy and precision are important for meaning.
- If attention is not given to form, form will not be learned accurately.
- Form-focused instruction is particularly important for aspects of the second language grammar that are very different from the first language or are not very noticeable.
- If learners' attention is drawn to expressing meaning only, they may neglect attention to accuracy and precision.

- Noticing an aspect of form is the first stage of learning it; it then needs to become part of the learner's internal grammar and to become part of the learner's internal resources ready for use in a range of situations.
- Teaching can direct learners' attention to features of grammar in the language they encounter orally and in writing.
- Learning grammar develops internal grammar.
- Grammar learning can occur through participation in discourse, through vocabulary and through learning chunks.
- Learners' errors inform teachers about their learning processes and their internal grammars.
- Teaching grammar explicitly requires the learner to think about language in very abstract formal ways that some find very difficult. The younger the learner the less appropriate it is likely to be.
- While learning grammar necessitates abstract thought on the part of the learner, children can master metalanguage if it is well taught and it is a useful tool.

Shak (2006) carried out a study with 78 children from three Primary 5 (10-year-old children) classes in Brunei Darussalam that investigated children's attitudes towards dictogloss. Dictogloss is a type of FoF task designed to enable learners' understanding of a target form in a meaning-focused context. The study was an initial step in ascertaining the effectiveness of incorporating FoF instruction into an upper primary English as a second language classroom. The children were given attitude questionnaires at the end of each lesson. The study explored whether teachers found dictogloss as FoF appropriate to use with children and whether children found it well matched to their interests, needs and motivation. Findings based on the children's responses showed that there were variations in children's attitudes to the task during the grammar lessons. The results also suggested that additional classroom research is needed to find ways for teachers to adapt the FoF

approach to their specific classes. It was seen that while there was a general trend of positive attitudes among children towards FoF, variations towards preference of task features existed. Children tended to rate the task more positively if they perceived it as one that is cognitively stimulating, yet not overly demanding, and that required fewer production demands. They also expressed particular partiality for stories and entertaining characters, which also served as additional contextual support.

In contrast to Cummins (1978), Scarcella (2014) claims it is a myth that it takes students seven years to acquire academic language, stating instead that the amount of time it takes students to master academic language directly depends on exposure to academic language, the amount of practice in using academic language, the extent of academic language instruction, and the quality of the feedback. She claims that it is possible to lay the foundation for academic language while teaching conversational skills. Such thinking suggests that it is not necessary to delay instruction in academic English. Before English learners are reading, the development of age-appropriate academic English – morphology, syntax, vocabulary – may possibly be accelerated orally through planned and deliberate daily instruction (Francis et al., 2006; Fillmore, 2004; Schlepppegrell, 2004; Scarcella, 2003). Miller (1985) found that in the design of FoF activities children as young as 5 were able to identify interest as a motivating factor in their attention to a task.

Pienemann's teachability hypothesis (1984, 1989, 1998) predicts that learning can only take place if the learner's interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting. Pienemann (1984) demonstrated the acquisition of German word order among Italian children. He demonstrated that instruction in the word order of structure requiring subject and verb inversion was successful in the case of those learners who had reached the stage immediately preceding the stage where this word order rule could be acquired. On the contrary it was not successful in learners who had not

reached this stage. He argues therefore that teaching should be limited to the learning of aspects of language for which the learner is ready.

According to DeKeyser (1997) learners given intensive practise on specific grammar points increase in speed and accuracy, developing the ability to access automatically knowledge that used to be accessed slowly and with difficulty. Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990) provides explicit noticing of language structures with a more important role: only input which is consciously noticed can be converted to intake, where it is then available for further processing.

2.11 Official documents that informed the study

In England, candidates for teacher training are required to undertake the literacy professional skills test, which contains a grammar section to ensure that they have a satisfactory standard of literacy (see Appendix 14). The literacy professional skills test is not based on a candidate's knowledge of the English national curriculum or on how to teach it. The total number of marks available ranges from 41 to 49. These are broken down as follows:

- spelling section – 10 marks
- punctuation section – 15 marks
- grammar section – 10 to 12 marks
- comprehension section – between 10 and 12 marks.

All current and prospective trainee teachers must pass the skills tests in numeracy and literacy before they can be recommended for the award of qualified teacher status (QTS). Initial teacher training (ITT) providers are responsible for checking that all trainees meet the current ITT entry requirements for the skills tests before they start the course. The importance of each test is highlighted by the fact that they can only be taken up to three times

and resits must be funded by the candidates themselves. The skills tests are in addition to the initial requirements to become a teacher. A summary of what the grammar section covers can be found in Appendix 14. Certain sections test a candidate's ability to identify text that does not conform to accepted grammatical practice. They are expected to distinguish between text that makes sense and clearly conveys its intended meaning and text that does not. A candidate is not tested on their knowledge of grammatical terms, but on their knowledge of how to use grammar correctly, so the emphasis is on the functional use of grammar. The grammar section also requires a candidate to construct a short, continuous prose passage. At four or more points in the text the respondent is asked to select the most appropriate choice for insertion to complete the passage.

A sample of the English curriculum from England is set out in Appendix 16. It clearly states what mandatorily needs to be taught to each level in years 1–6. The curriculum in England has recognised that grammar is a part of language teaching. While the new language curriculum in Ireland appropriately aligns English and Irish grammar teaching and recognises that skills learned in one language transfer to another, it has not addressed the grammar knowledge of current teachers and in fact in the third-level syllabus there is a presumption that teachers know grammar. This study suggests that this is not necessarily, perhaps not even likely to be, the case.

2.12 Conclusion

This literature review has looked at grammar teaching and learning from an educationalist's and a linguist's perspective. The fundamental theory of the sociocultural view of human development is that development occurs from the intermental to the intramental plane or from outside to within, which means what learners initially acquire as a function of interaction between people is later internalised as an individual function. Development therefore relies on mediation because the transference from the social to the

individual, from basic functions to higher and more complex functions, depends on the process of mediation. Specifically, because all higher mental processes including the learning of a second language are mediated by the meaningful aspect of language, it becomes essential for L2 grammar teaching to focus on the meaningfulness of speech.

Because concepts should be developed first and the names of the words that label them later, and because L2 learners already possess a meaningful linguistic system in their first language, L2 grammar teaching could initially rely on learners' L1 grammar knowledge to provide the concepts of the second language. As there is often a lack of one-to-one correspondence between meaning and linguistic form, it may be that L2 learners should be explicitly taught the pragmatics of the second language. In addition, the best way to achieve proficiency in all aspects of language use is by being exposed to the most varied types of social verbal interactions possible, as provided through CLT. Teachers' involvement is critical in this context because the task of creating conditions for supporting grammar learning lies with them. From a linguist's point of view it is now generally accepted that formal instruction does facilitate in some way the process of learning a second language (Ellis, 1994).

This review has also highlighted the significance of teacher perspectives in shaping their own behaviour (Fang, 1996) and that this is likely to be true in areas such as grammar teaching (Borg and Burns, 2008). It is also evident that many contextual factors influence the relationship between beliefs and practice. The expectation that a given statement of belief will also lead inevitably to a particular practice is inaccurate, particularly given the context-specific nature of some beliefs (Pajares, 1992), the potential for competition between beliefs (Farrell and Kun, 2008; Phipps and Borg, 2007; Basturkmen et al., 2004; Borg, 1999), and the range of constraints which teachers face in the classroom (Lam and Kember, 2006). It is also important to note the assertion from Pajares (1992) and Borg and Burns (2008) that when eliciting beliefs or perspectives from teachers, there should be

included some degree of observation that enables researchers to compare declared beliefs to practice.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the philosophical, theoretical, methodological and ethical considerations in developing a suitable research framework. The research seeks to access teachers' perspectives on the significance of a knowledge of English grammar to teach Irish as a second language in Irish primary schools because there is currently little extant research on this topic in the Irish context.

This investigation is exploratory and interpretive and does not set out to test specific hypotheses but instead investigates the value or not that teachers attach to grammar knowledge. It investigates teachers' opinions relating to grammar knowledge and the teaching of grammar and aims to examine teachers own grammar learning experiences. This includes how teachers conceptualise grammar teaching, their evaluations of its use in learning the grammar of another language, and the feelings they have about teaching it, including reflections on their linguistic subject knowledge. Elbaz (1990) believes that research into teachers' thoughts about their practice is potentially the approach likely to be the most fruitful. This study employs a sociocultural approach to research. Central to a sociocultural approach to research and methodology is the social formation of mind (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Wertsch, 1985). Lantolf and Johnson (2007) clarify that it is not social activity which influences cognition, instead it is social activity which is the process through which human cognition is formed.

Forms of teachers' professional knowledge have been referred to as personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985, 1986), practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983, 1990, 1991), classroom knowledge (Doyle, 1990) and working knowledge (Yinger and Hendricks-Lee, 1993). Each has a slightly different nuance, but essentially they are all trying to define in one way or another teachers' knowledge. Calderhead (1997) and Carter

(1990) argue that the most promising lines of research into describing teachers' professional knowledge are likely to come from qualitative studies which look at the practice of a few teachers in depth, rather than through surveying many.

Sociocultural theory recognises that individuals develop and mediate their own higher-order, cognitive processes. However, this perspective holds that the ability to develop and mediate individual cognition, as it begins socially, is not best studied, either theoretically or methodologically, as if it occurred solely or even mostly in the minds of individuals separated from their context. It is in looking at the context in which it occurs that the processes of cognitive formation open up to examination. In summary, sociocultural theory does not deny the existence of cognitive processes but holds that the development of these higher-order processes is rooted in experience, in the socially situated context that is present in all human activities.

Having chosen to set this research in the naturalistic tradition, there are concerns encountered by all engaged in qualitative methodology, that is, the problem of generalisation. The teachers who are the subject of this research can not necessarily be considered as representative of the population as a whole but may also be seen as typical.

3.2 The settings and the participants

The settings were chosen on a convenience basis in that schools were sought from the counties of Louth, Meath, Dublin and Kildare. The criterion for choosing them was that the schools approached would not be within a 10-mile radius of my school. This was in order to reduce reactivity from my role as principal. At the same time I chose schools that were not too far away to facilitate any interviews I might have been offered. I emailed 100 questionnaires all over Ireland with a cover letter (see Appendix 10). Fifteen questionnaires were completed and returned by post. These were from primary teachers in schools in Louth, Meath, Kildare and Dublin. They were from senior class teachers (fourth, fifth and

sixth class teachers, teaching 10- to 13-year-olds). Three teachers volunteered to do interviews via the questionnaire but one reneged at the last minute. I realised, indeed, that an interview is a privilege afforded to us (Denzin, 2001). There were three observations in two different schools in County Meath. These consisted of two observations of English lessons and one of an Irish lesson.

3.3 Methodological approach

The key influences on the mixed methodological approach were how best to generate data because there is limited research in the Irish context in the field, the ethical concerns around gathering data, and the theorising of practice in this area of research into grammar learning and teaching. As a study of perspectives the research seeks to get the everyday experiences of individuals. In attempting to use all means available to address the research questions (Rossman and Wilson, 1985), the study employs a mixed methods approach, which is a research design that involves gathering and analysing qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. As a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies it is important to focus attention on the research problem and use pluralistic approaches to develop knowledge about the problem (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Morgan 2007; Patton 1990). Mixed methods are important for research conducted in educational contexts (Myhill et al., 2012). Research drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research minimises the limitations of either approach. This was in expectation that ‘quantitative methods and qualitative methods will eventually answer questions that do not easily come together to provide a single, well-integrated picture of the situation’ (Patton, 1990, pp. 464–5) and provide a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5).

As an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014), the quantitative element of the research is conducted first. This was in the form of a semi-

structured questionnaire comprising 25 questions which provided some closed-ended data that was used to generate findings on teachers' opinions. The qualitative data generated around the quantitative data helped in interviewing because the qualitative research is used to elucidate the initial quantitative findings. Teachers' opinions were elicited via the questionnaire to generate data and test and explore this data via the interview and classroom observation. From a sociocultural view knowledge and understanding of grammar teaching are being constructed collaboratively through reflective social discourse.

The pilot project, which involved testing the questionnaire, the interview and observation, was quite successful. I gained five questionnaires, initially three interviews and one observation. Five questionnaires were emailed and then returned by post. After piloting the questionnaire it was edited, reducing the number of questions from 25 to 22 due to evidenced overlap. For the pilot interviews three interviewees became one as two teachers changed their minds and declined to be interviewed. For the research project there was a total of three interviews. Two of the interviews followed the observations. Observation allowed the witnessing of what happened in the classroom. The mixed research methods aim was to capture the complexity and individuality of each teacher and, in line with a sociocultural lens, to attempt to make meaning of how and if teachers use a knowledge of grammar to teach in their own context.

After the pilot study a further 95 questionnaires (see Appendix 7) were distributed by email to various schools. I spoke to the secretaries in the schools to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and project and to establish contact which would be of benefit if I needed to follow something up. Via the questionnaire, teachers could volunteer their names if they were interested in interview participation and also classroom observation. Because there was no obligation on the respondents to take part, the fact that teachers put themselves forward voluntarily meant that the reliability of the data was somewhat increased. However, the teachers who put themselves forward were of a particular type

because they had an interest in grammar or valued it in language teaching, and therefore they more or less selected themselves.

3.4 Methodological issues

3.4.1 Reflective practice

Influential thinking in relation to reflection stems from the work of Dewey (1933) and Argyris and Schön (1974). There have been many definitions of reflection put forward (Korthagen, 2001). Reflection has been recognised as ‘an essential tool in professional development’ (Burton, 2009, p. 300), while reflexivity, according to Glesne and Peshkin, (1992, p. 13), is ‘Learning to reflect on your behaviour and thoughts, as well as on the phenomenon under study, [creating] a means for continuously becoming a better researcher.’

Measor and Woods (1984, pp. 70–1) advocate making a setting ‘anthropologically strange’ and washing ‘your mind clean’. I arrived at each scene and attempted to look at every detail on the classroom walls as if I were obliged to note all. These were all contexts which were not my own and classrooms with which I was not familiar. I entered each classroom and noted all the displays of grammar either in English or Irish. I drew everything on paper. Measor and Woods (1984) also refer to ‘open closures’, by which they mean to question what seems commonplace and to investigate the taken for granted. While Bell (1993, p. 32) advocates suspending preconceptions, Mills (2011) reminds us that it is difficult to remain objective and open. She believes that one is looking into the mirror of ones findings as reflected in what one sees. In order to combat this I filled in my own research questionnaire (see Appendix 20) and referred to this from time to time to remind myself of my beliefs and in an attempt to see responses more neutrally.

As the researcher, I am the ‘primary’ (Watt, 2007) instrument of analysis and collection. The research success depends on me as the principal means of gathering

information. Reactivity refers to an alteration in performance or behaviour when people know that they are being watched, in this case when teachers know a principal is watching them. While the researcher as teacher was enough to cause reactivity, in seeking to elicit their views I was aware of the reactivity of the researcher as principal. Asking junior peers to participate could have resulted in power imbalances and the Hawthorne effect (Landsberger, 1950), whereby people modify their behaviour when an aspect of their environment changes. In this case, it is because they are being watched. The teachers might wonder if they would encounter me in another professional context in the future. Looking at the experience from their point of view, they may wonder if it is less risky all round and better not to voice any opinions they may hold. In addition, a teacher or any other research participant may not have the language or may be unwilling to express any unpopular beliefs, preferring to articulate views that are socially desirable. There is also the case that beliefs may be held unconsciously (Kagan, 1990) and beliefs are often held tacitly. I used reflexivity in an attempt to combat reactivity (McCormick and James, 1988) in my reflective journal by monitoring my own reactions, roles and biases and any other aspects that could affect this research. I also attempted to establish relationships with teachers that allowed symmetrical communication, i.e. the kind of social, political and practical discourse in which all participants communicate on equal terms and where all contributions are equally valued (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

3.5 Data collection tools

The initial stage of the investigation involved distributing questionnaires by email which probed around the issue of the role of grammar in L2 teaching. The main purpose of this preliminary phase in the investigation was to develop a better understanding by accessing teachers' held views on the role of grammar and its role and relevance in L2 teaching. This

stage of the investigation was to test the water, to get a base from which to launch the other elements of the research, notably the interviews and the classroom observation.

3.5.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was chosen as a data collection tool to address both research questions. The questionnaire (see Appendix 7) was the main method of eliciting teachers' perspectives on the role that grammar has played in their education and in their teaching lives. This initial exploration was necessary in order, firstly, to make sense of the problem on a larger scale. Secondly, it was necessary to gather valuable data from a number of varied sources, i.e. primary teachers working in different contexts. I hoped that by involving them in the study and by making my own interest in the topic of grammar in L2 teaching transparent, I would encourage an active interest in researching the issue, and establish that it was an area of shared concern, to which the respondents might feel motivated to contribute. Hodson (1989) recommends that 'any programme of curriculum development should start by considering current practice and the [sic] exploring teachers' perception of it' (p. 240).

The alignment of the questionnaire to the research questions is found in Appendix 6. Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20 and 21 relate to the first research question eliciting primary teachers' perceptions of the role of English grammar in language teaching in the Irish context. Questions 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 22 relate to whether a knowledge of English grammar supports the teaching of languages in the Irish context. The questionnaire is based on the conceptual framework of the literature review (see Appendix 5). Questions aimed to be clear, simple, relevant and specific, as advocated by Oppenheim (1992). Questionnaires have been labelled as being too restrictive 'by framing the answers according to a pre-established set of statements' (Kalaja and Barcelos, 2003, p. 15). To address this potential issue, I applied a Likert scale (1932), which is a range of

numbers graded according to the degree which someone may or may not agree with what is being said. I used a statement format and a five-scale Likert scale. I added another point on the Likert scale, a 'not applicable' option to remove the obligation on the respondent to generate a response, not because the teacher thought of the belief presented by the statement, but because teachers were to be presented with the researcher's beliefs (Munby, 1984). Teachers were given the option to say that what was being asked of them did not apply to them. In addition, spaces were left under each statement for teachers to elaborate on opinions expressed and address open-ended answers throughout the questionnaire to serve as a possible back-up for the information obtained and to elicit ideas, expressed in teachers' own words (Oppenheim, 1992). After the pilot study, the questionnaire was reviewed. As a result the statements were refined and two were eliminated because they overlapped in the information they sought. The questionnaire provided me with a foundation from where I could direct the interviews and consider how to approach classroom observation.

The teacher respondents were all primary-trained teachers: nine females and six males (Appendix 8 presents their profiles). Six teachers were in the 20–30 age bracket and had at least five years' teaching experience, six were in the 30–40 age group, and three were in the 40–50 age group. They were all working in senior classes fourth, fifth and sixth and were all based in large rural and urban schools in Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Louth.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interview

The interview was chosen as a means to build upon questionnaire responses. The first interview was conducted prior to the observation in the pilot. However, it was after the pilot study that I realised it would be more beneficial to interview after observing the teacher. This would enable me to ask questions about the observed lesson, allowing me to probe, illuminate and clarify classroom events. I had formulated a lengthy interview to

assist in building rapport and to put the teachers at their ease. I felt this would be more conducive to eliciting open and honest opinions and other information which might be volunteered. The effects of the asymmetrical relationship, between the interviewer and the interviewee, can be reduced if the interview is conducted in true interpretive spirit, as a two-way conversation (Woods, 1986) rather than as a researcher-dominated activity. This also facilitates in building between the perspectives and agendas of the interviewer (and hence of the assumptions around which the research process is constructed), and those of the interviewees. The need to both respect and reflect on participant understandings is not a new issue for social science research (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The principle that guided the interviews was to avoid direct questioning in favour of the indirect items. For example, instead of asking directly, ‘Do you like teaching grammar?’ asking ‘Have you fond memories of grammar teaching?’ I also attempted to make the questions sound as natural as possible (Nias, 1991) to allow others to describe it from their point of view (Denzin, 1978). I began by stating the purpose of the research, chatting with brief informal conversation (Kvale, 1996) until I felt that the teacher was ready to begin the interview. It affords the researcher the opportunity to explore tacit and unobservable aspects of participants’ lives (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

An interview is recognised as a socially situated event (Harrison et al., 2001). Interviews were applied to gain ‘intersubjective depth’ (Miller and Glassner, 1997, p. 106). Rogoff (1990, p. 71) describes intersubjectivity as a ‘shared understanding based on a common focus of attention and some shared presuppositions that form the ground for communication.’ I sought to access teachers’ individual understanding as it had been ‘appropriated’ during participation in practice, and to understand the process by which individuals transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation (Rogoff, 1994 p. 209). The meanings have been derived first in interaction with others; therefore, the process of sharing perspectives (intersubjectivity) is

part of the process of negotiating meaning. The significance of the term ‘interchange’ is that the goal of collaboration is not only to develop a shared perspective between people but also to access resources to inform individual learning. Teachers’ learning has occurred both collaboratively and individually, as an individual operates on others’ ideas to advance their own thinking. It is important to address how the researcher is positioned by the teachers, and vice versa (Harrison, et al., 2001).

Questionnaires might not go far enough in revealing the complexities in teachers’ understandings. The interviews were self-designed and semi-structured and the questions were designed to unfold as an informal dialogue. That said, the interviews are aimed to elicit displays of perspectives (Silverman, 1993, p. 107) rather than true or false reports on reality. The process of being interviewed has also impacted on the teachers’ perspectives, particularly when the questions required teachers to make explicit what had previously been held tacitly. I tried to avoid this by emphasising the exploratory nature of the research. The data provided to me represents what teachers presented as their perspectives and the interview in the pilot study demonstrates how individual each teacher’s perception on the classroom is. This was exemplified in how similar the questionnaire responses were, compared to the interview responses, which showed marked differences. Interviews were employed as a method to illuminate and clarify the significant data elements as revealed through the initial questionnaires.

Semi-structured interviews afforded the opportunity to build deeper understandings which had been elicited through the initial questionnaire responses. This method also avoided the potential rigidity that a more structured interview might have imposed. The questionnaire was structured and so, as typically quantitative, it gave a broad overview in terms of information. When answering my own questionnaire (see Appendix 20), I referred to the list of preconceptions and realised that each interview in the project provides an opportunity to obtain the perspectives of each teacher, built upon their life experiences and

reflecting the contexts in which their experience evolved. This yet again facilitated the meeting of perspectives between the agendas of the interviewer (and hence of the assumptions around which the research process is constructed) and those of the interviewees. The analyses should aim to reflect and focus on those points at which the perspectives of interviewers and interviewees interact (Griffin, 2007, p. 261).

The reflexive and dialogical interview is a central component of this project (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997; Denzin, 1995, 1997). Interview meanings are contextual, improvised and performative (Dillard, 1982, p. 32). An interview is an active text, a site where meaning is created and performed and the interview text creates the world, giving the world its situated meaningfulness. Every interview text selectively and unsystematically reconstructs that world and tells and performs a story according to its own version of narrative logic. The interview serves to allow the teachers to comment perhaps on their own experience of the increasing depth and clarity of the data generated via the questionnaire. Participant validation has been deemed problematic (Silverman, 1993) because it implies an ‘epistemological privilege’ for the participant, requiring a researcher to judge whether a disputed interpretation is ‘indeed an inaccurate record of the interview ... or ... a post-hoc rationalization, or the interviewee’s current ideas about what they are meant to say in the interview’ (Mason, 1996, p. 152). That said, the interviewees volunteered themselves, which meant that teachers should not have felt obliged to participate. However because the teachers self-selected, they were interested in grammar.

By avoiding force-choiced responses, it also helped in representing these experiences in teachers’ own language (Kvale, 1996). Additionally, this form of interviewing aims to solicit the active involvement of teachers in communicating the sense-making processes through which they interpret their own experiences. By using open-ended questions, data is generated which may be more elaborate and qualitatively richer than that generated through closed questions (Anderson and Burns, 1989). The reflexive

approach to interviewing appeared to be more responsive to the specific contributions the interviewee made, meaning that the researcher is more likely to fall upon unexpected discoveries (Cohen et al., 2000). Holstein and Gubrium (1997) also suggest that interviewees may be more likely to be active in the research because it may be more interesting for them.

3.5.3 Classroom observation

Although questionnaires were the initial and main data collection tool, I was aware that they often have limitations in the number and quality of responses between teachers' beliefs and practices (Grotjahn, 1991; Richardson et al., 1991; Schultz, 1970). Merriam (2009) suggests that the benefit of observation over interviews is that it allows the documentation of behaviour as it occurs first hand.

Grammar pedagogy is 'the performance of teaching together with the theories, beliefs, policies and controversies that inform and shape it' (Alexander, 2000, p. 540). Alexander (2000) identifies the curriculum with policies and dismisses its value when it is in this form. Instead, Alexander brings 'curriculum' and 'pedagogy' together, arguing that it is pedagogy that should be the focus of any analysis of practice in education. The teacher is representative of a particular community of practice, and characterising individuals in terms of their participation is characteristic of a sociocultural perspective (Cobb and Yackel, 1996). Children in Ireland are participants in very different types of learning activities and these activities are culturally organised at the Irish societal level.

In seeking teachers' beliefs, Pajares (1992) has highlighted that their beliefs do not lend themselves to empirical investigation, because of the problem in defining them. This is because beliefs are based on evaluation and judgement, whereas knowledge is based on objective facts. Beliefs underlie both what teachers declare as declarative knowledge and what they actually adopt in practice seen as procedural knowledge. I chose to observe

lessons to enquire beyond stated beliefs (Basturkmen et al., 2004) and to witness the theories in action (Argyris and Schon, 1974). This was in line with the recommendations of Pajares (1992) and Borg and Burns (2008) that studies of belief should include some degree of observation that enables researchers to compare espoused beliefs to practice, expanding the study of cognition to ‘the study of what teachers know, think, and believe and how these relate to what teachers do’ (Borg and Burns, 2008, p. 457). The value of observing teachers in their natural contexts (the classroom) and discussing their practices has been highlighted by Borg (2005b). In fact Borg (2003b, p. 105) expresses scepticism about whether language teachers’ cognition can be usefully studied without reference to what happens in the classroom. Direct evidence of behaviour is witnessed and it allows a large amount of descriptive data to be collected.

Observations may reveal beliefs which are embedded in context and practice, tacit or even unconscious, and may reveal competing, inconsistent, transient beliefs, or even beliefs which are in the process of change (Richardson et al., 1991, p. 578), whereas interviews offer beliefs which are more decontextualised and usually propositional. However, both Pajares (1992, p. 27) and Silverman (1993, p. 106) highlight the importance of linking interviews to observations when examining belief. Calderhead (1996, p. 711) states that, ‘observation alone is of limited value, for the cognitive acts under investigations are normally covert and beyond immediate access to the researcher’. It is true that ‘beliefs in use’ can only ever be inferred, and it is important to be clear that different types of ‘belief’ are examined through interview and through observation.

Because teachers develop a complex personal framework of values and beliefs in the course of their lives and because they bring these to the classroom they generate cultural models (Gee, 1999). Cultural models are theories that help to make sense of the world and experiences in it which are rooted in our socially and culturally defined practices. I was searching for the cultural models (Gee, 1999) which serve to inform

teachers' beliefs and subsequent grammar practice. As these are often held unconsciously, it may be also be necessary to infer them from people's behaviour.

As there could have been a significant issue of reactivity through the presence of the researcher in the classroom, it was necessary for me to be introduced to the class and to give the children an understanding of why I was present. I had suggested that the teachers call me by my first name when introducing me to the children and to explain that I am a person who was spending some time in Irish lessons in different classrooms to see how Irish was being learned. Labov (1972) referred to the 'observer's paradox', which highlights the fact that although the aim of most observational research is to collect data as unobtrusively as possible, the presence of an observer can actually influence the linguistic behaviour of those being observed. As previously stated, I was very conscious of the Hawthorne effect (Landsberger, 1950), whereby people modify their behaviour because they are being watched. I had found that in the pilot observation, because I was not directly visible to the pupils in the cloakroom at the back of the classroom, it seemed the class forgot that I was there. I therefore deduced that it is ideal to be 'hidden' in the classroom. I had not asked teachers how they actually taught grammar (being aware that the communicative approach is the one prevalent in Ireland) so observation offered me the chance to see their grammar teaching unmitigated by the reflection in interviews and questionnaires.

The three classroom observations served both to elucidate and validate or otherwise data generated via the questionnaires and interview but also provided qualitative data on the context of the grammar teaching and provided other unforeseen data which may have arisen incidentally. The impression that triangulation implies a realist ontology enabling a closer approximation to 'truth' is questionable because it may be argued that different methods reveal different aspects of a research subject, providing 'different versions or

“levels” of answer’ (Mason, 1996, p. 149) or revealing ‘situated’ actions and accounts which cannot be simply decontextualised through ‘triangulation’ (Silverman, 1993, p. 157).

3.5.4 Reflective journal

Throughout my research I carried a reflective journal (Appendix 17) in which I recorded ad hoc thoughts and ideas as they came to me in the course of the three years. These were often in relation to what I had read and to what I had noticed in classroom observations.

3.6 Sampling and ethical considerations

3.6.1 Ethics

The research design was informed by the British Educational Research Association [BERA] *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2011). Ethical approval was given by The Open University on 22 October 2013 before the research proceeded.

3.6.2 Responsibilities to participants

Having approached the board of management of schools, via the principals as gatekeepers, it was necessary that they completely understood the research and what was involved in participating in it. I communicated to the principals the extent of anticipated disruption in observing classrooms and I discussed the purpose and the use of data. When outlining the purpose of the study the anonymity, confidentiality and freedom to withdraw was emphasised in line with Dockrell’s ethical considerations in relation to the subjects of the research (1988). BERA (2011, p. 5) states that ‘Researchers must take the steps necessary to ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported.’ While Malone (2003) has argued that the very concept of ‘informed consent’ is incompatible with qualitative research due to the fact that ‘the

inductive, emergent nature of qualitative design precludes researchers being able to predict where the study will take them' (p. 800), the researcher has an obligation to the participants to be as transparent as possible because interviewing is a moral inquiry (Kvale, 2007). Respect and reciprocity for the participants were ensured (Creswell, 2014). Interpreting the understanding of others is also a 'political' (Harrison et al., 2001, p. 338) practice. I have used direct quotations as much as possible when presenting my findings, and to make clear distinctions between the raw data and my interpretations. In this respect, there is a connection between validity and ethics. When collecting data, I respected the site and attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible. I was conscious of the need to respect potential power imbalances, because I am a principal teacher interviewing teachers. I avoided leading questions and especially withheld sharing personal impressions. I involved participants as collaborators. One must work hard to achieve 'analytic distance' from the role, to set aside taken-for-granted assumptions and to see oneself in the role'. I reported multiple perspectives and contrary findings. I assigned fictitious names, to respect the privacy and anonymity of teachers. My sister, who is a primary school principal and who holds different views to me regarding grammar instruction, assisted as a 'peer debriefer' (Creswell, 2014). Her role was to review my study and ask questions and critique it, so that it could resonate with people other than myself as the researcher. Research should be seen in very different lights (Schultz, 1970).

Interviews often produce narratives that reinforce social norms precisely because they reflect the needs of the teacher to retain their social standing in the face of a person of authority (Elliott, 2005, p. 146). In this sense, the relationship between researcher and interviewee, 'how they are positioned', is not only key to the intersubjective generation of meaning in interviews, but is also a matter of ethical concern. The fact that I have interpreted and represented the teachers' beliefs and perspectives gives me a position of 'power' that can only be partially put right by careful wording and clear anonymity for the

teachers. Because the questionnaire had been anonymous and the teachers volunteered themselves, I was confident that participation was really their own decision. As for privacy: in any research it is vital that information remains confidential and anonymous, and this becomes all the more important in studies of belief and perspectives in which participants present personal values and thoughts. In line with the ethical principle of ‘confidentiality’ (Pring, 2000, p. 152) pseudonyms have been used during reporting, and contextual details kept at a level which will not allow teachers to be identified. The data has been held securely on my private, password-protected laptop, and all participants are able to have access to data held about them in line with the Data Protection Act 2003. Any written notes and questionnaires which were returned by post will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my house. If any teacher approaches me to withdraw their questionnaire, as per assurance given in the questionnaire, they have the right to withdraw any information given. If teachers withdraw any information that has been given to me by them it will be either returned – in the case of the questionnaire – or destroyed – in the case of notes that I have taken.

3.6.3 Incentives

BERA (2011) also raises the issue of incentives. Here, the main incentive for teachers was the intrinsic motivation to improve their professional practice by contributing to a body of research that was for the general good of the teaching profession. This is a significant benefit for teachers (Basturkmen et al., 2004), and should compensate for any loss that may have been caused by the additional drain on participants’ time.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the research methods which were chosen as a means to access primary teachers’ perspectives on the role of grammar in L2 teaching in the Irish context.

In any study of perspectives there are methodological limitations. Firstly, teachers self-selected into the study and this limits the range of responses; a randomly selected sample, on the other hand, may have provided a wider variation. It should also be acknowledged that any representation of perspective will be partial and context-bound and any verbal expressions of belief will be influenced by teachers' understanding of what is socially desirable.

Interviews will not necessarily allow the interviewer to 'gain access to the teacher's thoughts' (Borg, 1998, p. 13), but will produce co-constructed meanings. Observations of practice are often limited by the researcher's interpretation of what is witnessed, and will again only provide a partial representation of the teachers' pedagogical approaches. That said, the research proceeded in iterative stages of data collection and analysis and so it has attempted to produce an account teachers' perspectives. It is therefore my conviction that the perspectives that are represented here contribute to the research literature related to teachers' perspectives on the value of grammar knowledge in L2 learning.

4 THE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data which was gathered and to address the research questions. Data is also looked at in terms of previous research and through a sociocultural lens to understand it. While there are many theoretical approaches which could have been adopted, a sociocultural approach examines not just the teacher, but the social, historical, institutional and cultural factors in which the teacher is embedded. A sociocultural approach fitted this research on teachers' perspectives because of the particularity and significance of the Irish context. The Irish language is the first language despite the fact that less than 5% of the population speak it. The significance of the Irish language is manifested in its stature in the curriculum. In addition, the communicative approach to teaching languages in the Irish context promotes language learning as participation in social relations and cultural activities (Carr and Cowie, 1997).

Rogoff (2003) stresses how socioculturally framed research differs from conventional research through the way researchers frame their data for analysis. An argument that is central to Rogoff's work is that the lenses sway between the intrapersonal/personal to the interpersonal to the cultural/institutional. Rogoff (2003, p. 60) summarises this, stating 'we see a glimpse of a moving picture involving the history of the activities and the transformations towards the future in which people and their communities engage'. This analysis may be understood in that light. Phase One involved questionnaires which provide a representation of perspectives across the sample of 15 teachers, representing the personal lens. The questionnaire supplies data which is quantitative in terms of teachers' choice of response to perspectives as presented to them (see Appendix 7). The questionnaire also furnishes qualitative data because it is semi-structured with commentary provided by the teachers. This data was analysed in Phase Two. Phase Three involved

analysing the semi-structured data provided by the interviews and these add more substance to the commentaries in the questionnaires and were interpersonal because perspectives were being accessed and teachers were articulating explicitly what is often held implicitly. Phase Four moved the lens from the interpersonal to the cultural/institutional context of the teacher in the classroom when lessons were observed. Plowright (2011) reminds us that all data, irrespective of whether it is numerical or narrative, result from the intervention in that part of the social world for which it is chosen for study.

This chapter sets out the analysis of the data which addresses the research questions:

1. What are primary teachers of Irish's perspectives on teaching and learning grammar in the Irish context?
2. Does a knowledge of English grammar support the teaching of additional languages in the Irish context?

4.2 Phase One: Quantitative analysis – the questionnaire

The benefit of the questionnaire was that it provided a broad perspective on the research topic. Because it provided a good overview of teachers' perspectives on grammar teaching in Irish primary schools, it served to guide the in-depth interviews and observations in order to access a more deeper understanding of the research topic. The findings of the questionnaire are presented in Table A.8 in Appendix 12. The questionnaire findings can be summed up as follows: looking at the function of grammar the teachers were unanimous that English grammar was important to a greater or lesser degree. Six out of fifteen teachers highlighted that children use grammar to understand meaning. With regard to the use of grammar six teachers agreed that understanding English grammar helps one to

understand Irish grammar, with seven agreeing that understanding English grammar helps a teacher to teach Irish grammar better.

In terms of their experiences, only four teachers found it easy to understand English grammar. Eleven teachers acknowledged that they had difficulty understanding English grammar to a greater or lesser extent. Eleven teachers had been taught grammar in primary schools. This had not been consistent and was often once in a school year throughout their school lifetime. Fourteen teachers acknowledged that they had not been taught Irish grammar in college. Nine had not been taught how to teach English grammar to primary pupils. Only four declared that they had been taught how to teach Irish grammar as part of their teaching degree. These teachers most probably had done academic Irish as part of their degree. In Irish teacher training colleges, teachers may choose two academic subjects in their first year of teacher training and at the end of the first year they choose one of those in which to specialise. This is for self-development. Irish grammar is taught as an element of academic Irish only.

In their teaching lives there was significant variance in the number of times that grammar was taught weekly by the teachers to pupils. From this study, it seems that teachers decide how much, if any, grammar is to be taught. Only four teachers said that they would teach it more often if they knew more about it, implying that the other 11 teachers felt confident in their grammar knowledge. Eleven teachers acknowledged correcting oral grammar if they encountered mistakes and fourteen agreed that they would correct written grammar mistakes. These 11 teachers were the ones who declared having been taught grammar at some stage during their primary school lives, and so it would seem that grammar knowledge determines teaching.

Twelve teachers expressed that it is important to teach Irish grammar and seven teachers acknowledged that they would teach more Irish grammar if they knew more about it. Ten teachers corrected oral grammar mistakes in Irish and twelve corrected written

grammar mistakes. Fourteen out of fifteen expressed enjoyment in teaching English grammar. Teachers seemed to be positively disposed to grammar teaching. Teachers acknowledged teaching as much grammar as they need to, with four teachers saying that they would teach English grammar more if they knew more about it. Seven said that they would teach Irish grammar more if they knew more about it.

4.3 Phase Two: Qualitative analysis – comments in the questionnaires

Qualitative data analysis is ‘a creative endeavour involving intuition and empathy’ (Webb, 1999, p. 328). In an attempt to contribute to the ‘rigour and dependability’ (Lincoln, 1990, p. 71) of the analysis, the stages of analysis are outlined. This data has been analysed in three stages: the first stage involves analysing the data thematically; the second stage, interpretative analysis, involved interpreting the results which emerged and relating them to previous research; and the third stage involved looking at the data through a sociocultural lens.

4.3.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for:

identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79)

The qualitative data generated through the interviews and comments in questionnaires were analysed thematically. The coding of the Phase Two questionnaire and Phase Three interview comments were undertaken in clear steps designed to ensure thoroughness and rigour. The first step involved reading and rereading through all

perspectives to ensure being fully immersed in the data, in the phase Wellington characterises as ‘taking apart’ (2000, p. 134). This immersion in the data was achieved by writing words that seemed to sum up each perspective. Comments that seemed to relate to each other were then colour-coded. A sample of the pattern that emerged has been presented in Appendix 9. The qualitative data generated through the questionnaire and the interview findings has been organised into themes deriving from the colour-codes which emerged from the data. This was followed by a comparison of results and codes which enabled the creation of themes were used. I then worked independently with the data using the themes to organise data in relation to the research questions. This involved reflection and rewriting notes as a reflective and reflexive iterative process to clarify my understandings of what the teachers were saying, linking the elements of data to the research questions.

4.3.2 The emergence of themes

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. The themes which emerged are defined in Table 4.1 below and show how they are understood in the context of this research. The findings are organised under thematic headings demonstrating that the codes are used to analyse the data. The various themes relate to the research questions as follows: the function referred to the role of grammar in language teaching and whether an understanding of English grammar helps in understanding and teaching Irish grammar. Teachers’ perspectives on teaching and learning grammar were accessed through the value that they accorded or not to grammar teaching. Closely linked with this were the teachers’ own experiences of teaching and learning grammar in the Irish context. This probed whether teachers were able to teach grammar and this included teachers’ views on the relevance of teaching English and Irish grammar and teachers’ enjoyment of teaching

English and Irish grammar. The feelings or suggested feelings by the teachers in relation to grammar teaching were also noted. This is also summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Linking themes to research questions

Theme	Definition	Data sought	Research question
Function/role of grammar	Is understood as its <i>raison-d'être</i> – the reason for its existence as opposed to what use may be made of it	Role of grammar in language teaching	Does a knowledge of English grammar support the teaching of Irish as a second language in the Irish context?
Use	How grammar is used	How teachers use grammar in their everyday teaching Whether teachers' understanding of English grammar helps them to teach Irish	What are primary teachers of Irish's perspectives on teaching and learning grammar in the Irish context?
Value	The level of importance or relevance of grammar	Teachers' views on the relevance of teaching English and Irish grammar	What are primary teachers of Irish's perspectives on teaching and learning grammar in the Irish context?
Experience in their learning lives	How/if teachers learned grammar in	Whether teachers' knowledge base of English and Irish	Does a knowledge of English grammar support the teaching of Irish as a second language in the Irish context?

	<p>their lives to date</p>	<p>grammar influences how much they teach</p> <p>How often, if at all, teachers were taught English and Irish grammar in primary school</p> <p>Whether teachers were taught English and Irish Grammar as part of their teaching degree</p> <p>Whether teachers were taught English and Irish Grammar methodology as part of their teaching degree</p>	
<p>Experience in their teaching lives</p>	<p>How teachers experience teaching grammar in their teaching lives</p>	<p>The frequency of teachers' use of English and Irish grammar in their teaching</p> <p>Teachers' held opinions on the</p>	<p>What are primary teachers of Irish's perspectives on teaching and learning grammar in the Irish context?</p>

		difficulty of English and Irish grammar Teachers' enjoyment of teaching English and Irish grammar	
Feelings evoked by teaching grammar	Any feelings experienced in teaching grammar		What are primary teachers of Irish's perspectives on teaching and learning grammar in the Irish context?

4.3.3 Grammar as a means to 'mean'

English grammar was highlighted as being really important for understanding, reading, writing texts and speaking because grammar is linked to meaning. Grammar was cited as being necessary to understand meaning and suggesting a more prescriptive academic grammar. This happened through the structure that grammar provides:

English grammar is really important for understanding, reading, writing texts and speaking. (Pat)

Grammar and meaning are linked. Lack of knowledge on grammar – lacking how to mean and how words function in different contexts. (Michael)

It seems that through L1 grammar, structure and order are facilitated and so therefore is clarity, which facilitates understanding. Grammar gives meaning in communication:

It is an essential component of communication; a means of getting across our message and in turn for people to understand what we mean. (Bernadette)

Aoife hinted at the significance of the sociocultural text and the awareness of different dialects stated that:

a lack of knowledge on grammar results in a lack of how to mean and how words function in different contexts.

Joe also referred to L1 grammar as:

being crucial to understanding and communicating in different contexts.

Tony referred to the idea of:

grammar as a discipline

and as a more traditional perspective on grammar teaching. Grammar commands both structure and order in language use:

It gives children an understanding of the structure and order within the language and they develop a greater appreciation of the language being studied. (Ann)

Teachers recognised that grammar is the glue that holds language structurally. Not one teacher denied the significance of grammar.

4.3.4 Grammar for communication

Grammar was highlighted as being beneficial for communication purposes:

It is an essential component of communication; a means of getting across our message and in turn for people to understand what we mean. (Siobhán)

This was both a productive and a receptive use of the language both orally and in writing. Through our knowledge of prescriptive grammar, meaning is communicated effectively:

Yes, we use grammar in the language that we use to communicate to others.

Grammar helps us to express ourselves correctly. (Bernadette)

Joe implied that grammar was indispensable. He referred to grammar being:

crucial to understanding and communicating in different contexts.

This emphasises the important goals in acquisition as being to use language grammatically and being able to communicate. Grammar helps:

to enable children to read fluently and with comprehension and to speak articulately to be easily understood. (Miriam)

Sara said:

Grammar is used to make oneself understood and for communication and expression and this helps in written communication.

Tom stated that:

Grammar is used to communicate 'clearly'.

Jane referred to:

Grammar to make oneself understood.

Aoife referred to the fact that L2 Irish is not a language that is heard or spoken in the social context and it makes it difficult to create familiar contexts as part of a communicative language teaching approach:

Irish grammar is difficult to teach because it is difficult to create contexts that are familiar to children and it is difficult to make it fun and enjoyable.

She referred perhaps to the fact that it is not a fact of children's everyday life outside of school. However the communicative approach, through its emphasis on communicating, presents Irish in role plays that mimic real-life communicative situations.

4.3.5 Grammar for precision

The use and idea of prescriptive grammar was highlighted by Sharon as being:

proper [language for appearances because it is important] to *speak properly*.

It was noted that grammar is often used for cosmetic appearances in personal displays of education:

Letter writing, future CV's and professional emails still rely on correct grammar as a measure of one's education & intelligence in my opinion. (Tony)

This is perhaps a more prescriptive view of the function of grammar. Marcus lamented that grammar in modern times has been abandoned to colloquial forms and abbreviations in this age of speed messaging and mobile texting conversations:

In a society addicted to speed and instant gratification, 'proper' language has been downgraded as being out-of-date.

And Miriam suggested that:

Good grammar equals good quality work.

Tom associated using correct grammar with developing competence in formal written language. Grammar was equated with education:

it is seen as a measure of education. (Marcus)

This links prescriptive grammar and formal academic writing. Grammar is a bridge to formal academic language. Jane also distinguished between informal speech and formal language for more academic purposes, noting that children:

write how they speak – they need to be corrected.

Tom linked speaking to writing and grammar stating that:

If children spoke more correctly, they would have more confidence in writing the language.

This was resonated by Sinead when referring to the significance of corrective feedback. Sinead highlighted the importance of developing oral language, explaining that children often write the way they speak, so getting them to use the correct structures will improve not only their oral communication but also their written work:

I do this as children often write how they speak. It is important to develop oral language using the correct structures so that this will not only improve their oral communication but also their written work.

Teachers like Marcus, in his extended interview, had noted that grammar in its correct use was distinguishable from the:

slang [and] downgraded informal language.

Grammar needed to be taught and prescriptive grammar shows a measure of education.

4.3.6 Perspectives on the role of grammar for L2 learning

Aoife highlighted that grammar foundation in one language supported learning another in both comparison and contrast:

It makes perfect sense to teach grammar as a basic understanding and knowledge of how a language is structured and how the use of words works and rules that apply because later when learning a new language it is easier to comprehend how languages and their grammar differ slightly from one another.

Jane referred to the benefits of contrast between languages to highlight the facilitative way this helped with learning.

It seemed that grammar sometimes may be seen as a main link to understanding other languages. Aoife stated that:

Although the grammar (Irish) is quite different it can be helpful to know how language in general works in order to apply it to a new language.

While Tony acknowledged that he was not sure whether a knowledge of L1 English grammar would help you understand L2 Irish grammar:

a good understanding of English grammar would allow you to teach Irish grammar in a better way.

He seemed to be saying that in fact he felt that a knowledge of grammar assisted in understanding and therefore teaching Irish grammar. He seemed to be alluding to the idea that one of the benefits of having a knowledge of one grammar might facilitate the understanding of another, but he was not certain:

I am not sure – if they are linked and whether or not it would be beneficial to teach them together. (Tony)

Rachel referred to the fact that Irish grammar is different to English grammar and, indeed, that a knowledge of grammar can be:

crucial to understanding another.

Jane stated:

It can be tricky to explain Irish grammar to the class as it is quite different to what they already know of it. It can be challenging. It makes perfect sense to teach grammar as a basic understanding and knowledge of how a language is structured and how the use of words works and rules that apply.

Aoife declared:

It is ‘vital’ to teach Irish grammar particularly because the sentence structure is so unlike English sentence structure and the children find it so difficult to learn.

Sara affirmed that:

understanding the rules regarding how language works is important when teaching any language lesson. The knowledge that a learner has of one language heavily influences a newly acquired language. Understanding how grammar works as a teacher is essential and allows you to convey messages to the students regardless of what language you are teaching.

Grammar for L2 learning was not seen by all to be relevant on the basis that:

they are two completely different grammars. (Rachel)

Just over half the teachers expressed the view that having a knowledge of English grammar would support the teaching of additional languages. The other teachers were quite divided on whether a knowledge of English grammar supported the teaching of Irish in the Irish context. The main argument was that English and Irish were two:

different grammars. (Rachel)

Mat, however, stated that he had not appreciated the significance of grammar nor that he had the confidence to teach it until he had learned more about it through his studies. Only then had he appreciated it more.

Because this study explores the role of English grammar in the learning of a second language the same questions were asked relating to Irish grammar as had been asked for English grammar.

Mat declared that the Irish language would have less value if its meaning and structure were '*deliberately compromised*' (by not teaching it). Mat seemed to imply, therefore, that Irish grammar needed to be taught as much as English grammar, otherwise one is possibly downgrading its importance. He also emphasised the importance of teaching prescriptive grammar.

Aoife acknowledged the particularity of the Irish context in that Irish is not spoken as a living language and the impact of the lack of real living contexts where Irish is spoken:

Irish grammar is difficult to teach because it is difficult to create familiar contexts and so it is difficult to make it fun and enjoyable.

However:

a good understanding of English grammar would allow you to teach Irish grammar in a better way. (Tony)

Indeed one teacher declared it that it is quite challenging to teach Irish grammar when the children do not have an understanding of what grammar actually is. In fact, most children were deemed to hate Irish:

not to mention Irish grammar because it's laborious. Irish grammar was deemed 'awkward'. (Bernadette)

With regard to opinions held generally with regard to Irish:

there is a lack of interest on children's behalf and in fact the fact that Irish grammar was so different to what they already know of English grammar. (Rachel)

Sara acknowledged the common underlying proficiency between languages.

Aoife also said:

Understanding the rules regarding how language works is important when teaching any language lesson. The knowledge that a learner has of one language heavily influences a newly acquired language. Understanding how grammar works as a teacher is essential and allows you to convey messages to the students regardless of what language you are teaching.

4.3.7 Teachers' prior experiences of learning grammar and linguistic subject knowledge

Most teachers had 'encountered' L1 and L2 grammar at some stage in their primary schooling. However, this seemed to lack homogeneity in terms of how much and when.

Comments made included:

Maybe it's that I felt that I was not taught all the rules of English grammar in my schooling days so part of my education in this area was self-taught. (Tom)

Grammar experiences ranged from having been taught by one teacher who was:

well versed in parsings (Bernadette)

to having to teach oneself. Age and era of schooling did not have a bearing on this, as evidenced through the teachers' profiles (see Appendix 8).

It seemed that if one had been taught L1 grammar during one year of primary school this helped to ensure some grammar knowledge. Sometimes teachers teach themselves a topic if they feel they need to know it. Marcus also said that a lot of his grammar knowledge had been 'self-taught'. Mat stated that it was now easier to teach grammar since he had done a masters degree in grammar and had learned grammar as a result of this experience. He declared that he teaches more grammar now because he:

knows more about it and in his view children are engaging in a more functional approach which has been used in Australia. This has resulted in greater success rates as shown by increased comprehension. (Mat)

4.3.8 Teachers' own grammar experiences

Not one teacher had experienced English grammar learning during their undergraduate degree. Six teachers stated that they would teach more about grammar if they knew more about it. Mat declared that it was only since he had done a masters degree about grammar

and felt he understood grammar differently that he taught it more often. There was not a common expression of when or how grammar had been taught to them. While for some teachers lack of knowledge means that they are unable to teach grammar. Paula described that she felt she had acquired a good knowledge of grammar from having taught English as a second language over a period of time to second language learners. She felt this gave her an advantage over teachers who had no such experience and neither the required preparation in college nor the education. In summary, there was a significant number of teachers who had not received explicit grammar instruction in primary school. Those who had received instruction had done so inconsistently over the course of their primary education. In addition, at college where teachers are being trained to teach and deliver a curriculum no attention is being given to ensuring that teacher have explicit English grammar knowledge.

4.3.9 Pupils' responses to grammar learning

Bernadette highlighted how disinterested children were in learning L1 and L2 grammar:

I do find, however, that children aren't particularly motivated to learn grammar.

Children were deemed to:

hate Irish not to mention Irish grammar because it's laborious. (Rachel)

Irish grammar was deemed awkward. (Aoife)

With regard to opinions held that generally with regard to Irish:

there is a lack of interest on children's behalf and in fact the fact that Irish grammar was so different to what they already know of English grammar. (Tony)

Irish grammar is difficult to teach because it is difficult to create contexts that are familiar to children and it is difficult to make it fun and enjoyable. (Michael)

Irish grammar is difficult to teach as the children find it difficult and uninteresting.

(Mary)

4.3.10 Affective responses to grammar

Grammar evoked many feelings such as:

I like teaching grammar. (Bernadette)

I don't mind teaching English grammar. (Aoife)

English grammar is difficult. (Mary)

While teachers admitted not particularly liking L1 or L2 grammar, some acknowledged that they thought it has a purpose in academic contexts:

I wouldn't say I actually like it but I teach it. (Rachel)

Others admitted not particularly liking grammar, but acknowledged that they taught it. While they do not like it, it seems they still teach it if they have the knowledge to do so. Their motivation appears to be based on their belief of its value and correct use. In response to the question on whether it is important to teach Irish grammar the teachers responded:

I do believe so, as the Irish language would have less value if its meaning and sentence structure are deliberately compromised. (Marcus)

Yes for the same reason one would take on the importance of learning English grammar. (Aoife)

It is vital to teach Irish grammar. In order to compose sentences we must have the mechanics of the sentence structure, particularly so with Irish, which is so unlike English sentence structure and why I feel that children find it so difficult to learn.
(Bernadette)

Teachers are more motivated by what they believe to be effective teaching than they are by policy or directives. This was exemplified by Paula and the fact that she continues to teach a child reading even though policy directs waiting until the child is in a higher class.

4.3.11 Perspectives on primary pupils' readiness for grammar

None of the teachers expressed opinions that children were too young to learn L1 or L2 grammar. In fact Paula had declared quite unreservedly that they [the curriculum planners] had '*dumbed it down*'. All teachers held the relevance and importance of grammar to a lesser or greater degree and not one had stated that it was not relevant to be teaching grammar to primary children.

4.3.12 Using the language to teach the language

Paula declared that she disagreed with the challenge imposed by the government, as they oblige teachers to teach Irish through Irish. Rachel also felt that this did not encourage teachers to teach the language.

Aoife summed it up:

Teaching oral Irish through Irish is no problem. Explaining grammar rules through Irish is difficult. (Aoife)

Grammar and meaning were linked in this research, echoing Halliday's reference (1994) to the aim of language being to make meaning, to make sense of words and to interact with others effectively. Grammar is a meaning-making tool because connections are made between form and meaning, echoing Van Patten et al. (2004). Some teachers seemed to have a good understanding of grammar as a tool (Vygotsky, 1978) to assist in language learning rather than grammar being an end in itself. However, the majority of teachers in this research grouping did not have a sociocultural understanding of grammar in its relation

to the achievement of social purposes. Only one teacher expressed a clear understanding of grammar as functional and he stated that he had not understood this until he had done his masters degree in grammar. Two other teachers linked function and form because ‘grammar is the study of linguistic forms realizing functions or meanings’ (Austin, 2001; Halliday, 1997; Hymes, 1972). Teachers echoed Widdowson’s views (1983) that language learning is not merely acquiring the knowledge of the rules of grammar, but also as acquiring the ability to use language to communicate. However, it was only a minority of three teachers (Aoife, Joe and Mat) who expressed this explicitly.

Aoife linked the importance of emphasising and relating the way people use language (its function) with the grammar (the form) they specifically require to communicate (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999). This emphasises the important goals in L2 acquisition as being to use language grammatically and being able to communicate either verbally or in academic writing. This again echoes the understanding of Hymes (1972) and Widdowson (1983) that linguistic competence is linked to communicative competence. It was recognised that there is a place for grammar in CLT (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011; Savignon, 2005).

None of the other teachers had an awareness of the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) nor of knowing that all the strengths and grammar knowledge gathered in the first language can be used in the process of learning the second language. This recalls the interdependence hypothesis of Cummins (1978) that the knowledge in one language supports the learning of another because of the CUP. Ó’Laoire et al. (2000) suggest that learners ‘consciously or subconsciously draw on various sources of previous language learning in all subsequent language learning’. The knowledge of the grammar of one language forms the foundation from which to understand another language’s grammar. Some responses were uncertain. Tony stated that Irish Grammar:

follows patterns like other languages I’ve encountered.

Ann declared:

Yes often the rules are transferable. When not, it can help simply to understand that rules apply.

Joe is not sure:

if they are linked and would it be beneficial to teach them together.

However, Bernadette summed up:

although the grammar is quite different it can be helpful to know how language in general works in order to apply it to a new language.

While acknowledging that increasing language teachers' explicit knowledge about grammar through teacher education will not necessarily lead to more effective instruction (Borg, 2003a), it would ensure that it would be more likely that a teacher would be able to teach grammar. Teachers need not only a declarative knowledge of grammar (Shulman, 1986) but also grammatical pedagogical content knowledge of how grammatical constructions create meaning in order to promote more effective teaching. This is a procedural use of grammar knowledge.

This was in line with Ellis's review of studies that show FoF's positive effect on L2 acquisition for children aged 12 or below (2002a, p. 229). This study has therefore brought to the fore a topic whereby some have argued that grammar teaching with younger primary pupils is not relevant and that expectations have been reduced based on the assumption that we should expect less. As Paula questioned: are they just '*dumbing it down*'. The term 'young learners' encapsulates children of 5–12 years (Rixon, 1999). They both echo Cameron (2015) when she highlights that certain uses of a common mother tongue might in fact support the learning of the second language. Cameron (2015, p. 199) sums this up: 'Use as much of the target language as possible and ensure the use of the first language supports the child's language learning.' The particularity of the Irish context whereby Irish

is a language which is not experienced outside school means that the government are trying to maximise exposure to the language. However, to assume a simple linear relationship is oversimplifying and ignores the possibility that certain uses of a common mother tongue might in fact support the learning of the second language. The importance of children's enjoyment in learning grammar was emphasised and this did not seem to be the case among this group of teachers. If teachers find it difficult to teach, more than likely the pupils find it difficult to understand and learn. This was in conflict with Bouffard and Sarkar (2008) and Harley and Hart (1997) who reported that children could partake in and enjoy grammar learning.

Only one teacher in this study understood grammar from a sociocultural point of view and two other teachers referred to the mechanics of functional grammar as it is oriented to how meaning is made. While the two teachers did not label their understanding of grammar as functional grammar, they understood that grammar is a way into exploring how choices in wording create different meanings and together build up different texts to achieve diverse social purposes. The teacher Mat had not appreciated the significance of grammar nor had the confidence to teach it until he had learned more about it through his masters studies. He then appreciated it more. He linked thinking and communicating coming together in meaningful pedagogical tasks in the L2 classroom:

Children need explicit instruction about how language is used but through modelling interactions with peers not through corrections. (Mat)

He expressed a sociocultural understanding of grammar. This recalls Widdowson's recommendation (1983) to teach communicative competence along with linguistic competence. The conceptual significance of grammar (Vygotsky, 1978) was alluded to in the reference to comprehension when Rachel said that grammar is important to enable children to read fluently and with comprehension and to speak articulately so that they can be easily understood. Thinking and communicating should come together in meaningful

pedagogical tasks in the L2 classroom (Negueruela Azarola, 2003). Classroom teaching that is based on unsystematic teaching of grammar or lack of guided conceptual reflection by pupils does not lead to the development of coherent and complete conceptual understandings.

However, in this study more than half the teachers do not have this understanding. Most teachers in this study did not understand the conceptual significance of grammar from a sociocultural point of view. Mat explained:

English grammar is difficult to understand. Focus on forms does not benefit children. Children need to use grammar and identify grammatical structure that relates meaning and form. I teach more grammar now because I know more about it. Children are engaging in a more functional approach used in Australia – greater success rates – increased comprehension.

The understanding of language is part of the teacher's role because it affects what happens in the classroom and also affects the ways in which learners begin to understand the relationship between their own languages and the languages of their learning. Four out of fifteen teachers stated that they would teach more Irish grammar if they knew more about it, with two undecided and nine certain they would not teach more grammar, because it would seem they felt they were teaching an adequate amount.

The sociocultural view of education was evident with the teachers' recognition that grammar serves to bridge formal academic language. This was in the references to grammar being associated with displaying a measure of education and echoes Vygotsky's reference (1962) to grammar serving as a mediating influence between scientific 'academic' and spontaneous 'informal' concepts or what he referred to as 'between the opposing paths of development there exists a mutual dependency just as between the development of scientific and spontaneous concepts' (cited in John-Steiner, 1985, p. 350). A sociocultural perspective recognises, like Vygotsky (1972) that if grammar is known in

the mother tongue the net effect is that grammatical structures are the same across languages substituting different lexems for the same content. Mat understood its potentiality only because he had done a masters degree in grammar. He echoed Vygotsky's assertion (1978) that grammar has the potential to become a functional knowledge for L2 learners and it is the means to think about language through language. The importance is seeing how the promotion of learning of grammatical rules and metalinguistic terms in the L2 classroom fosters L2 development from a conceptual perspective. It would help teachers to be aware of the concept formation. Some teachers seemed to have a good understanding and appreciation that grammar is a tool (Vygotsky, 1978) to assist in language learning rather than an end in itself. However, this was not the majority.

From a sociocultural point of view, the teacher's role should involve providing children with the opportunity to create and coordinate the many learning experiences of which they are capable. While Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1962) agreed that social interaction has a role in children's intellectual development, Piaget would have recommended that grammar teaching should not commence until adolescence, because he maintained that the concrete operational phase would develop between the ages of 7/8 and 11/12. However, there have been considerable challenges to Piaget's assertion that children can perform some cognitive tasks at earlier ages than he suggested.

4.4 Phase Three: Interview analysis

Only one teacher allowed me to record the interview and for that reason her interview was longer than the others. I observed two of the teachers before their interviews and this afforded me the opportunity to question them also on what I had seen during the course of the observation. The transcripts of the three entire interviews are to be found in Appendix 13. The following is an analysis of the data generated through the interview with three

teachers. While the researcher's viewpoint could be seen as giving a one-sided view, it is also significant because this is the person who is closest to the topic.

4.4.1 Paula

The extended interview was done with Paula, a teacher who has 28 years experience in teaching (English as a foreign language) in primary school classes and whose current role of deputy principal over a period of seven years has afforded her the insight gained from managing a team of young teachers. The school in which she is working is made up of pupils for whom English is not necessarily their first language and Irish would be a third language. This teacher afforded the research broad perspectives on a wide range of issues pertinent to the topic of grammar teaching. Paula enjoyed talking about lots of issues relating to grammar in language teaching and highlighted the differences between the Irish context and other sociocultural arenas such as France and America.

The function of grammar

Paula emphasised that grammar had a very important place in children's learning and in language teaching. She stressed that in her experience, children are very good language learners and grammar learning in the first language should begin in first class (7 years old). In her experience from second language EAL (English as an additional language) teaching, she felt children could start learning second language grammar from fourth class (10 years old). She stated that the lack of emphasis on grammar in the current curriculum was not conducive to children learning grammar and that the grammar content taught had been reduced, so children were not being taught enough nor being adequately challenged in what they are being taught.

Do you think grammar should be taught to primary pupils?

Yes I think from first class upwards their attention can be drawn to things that are around the wall to it. Yes when they have a good foundation you can – I wouldn't start in Irish until they know their second language around fourth class and I will say to them tell me what describes a noun – an adjective and what describes a verb – an adverb. Teachers should be constantly drawing pupils' attention to the grammar and then by fourth class they can be ready to learn Irish grammar because they will have a good foundation in their native language ... You can say what's this 'Teach' (house) so that if you are supposed to be using Gaeilge (Irish) only to teach Gaeilge (Irish) well then how are you supposed to connect it to the English or first language – you need to have a discussion about it in English and you are not going to do it in fourth, fifth or sixth ... you aren't going to stop a discussion in English to ask what a word is in Irish so where do you do it ????? I think you should always use the first language when teaching the second and draw attention to the similarities and differences between them all.

Paula articulated clearly how (she felt) a knowledge of English grammar could support the learning of Irish grammar in later primary school years. She also expressed her dismay at the obligation to use Irish to teach Irish when a teacher could be using a first language to support the teaching of a grammatical element in Irish that they have already learned in English.

The use of grammar

Children apply grammar knowledge automatically within language learning according to Paula. She referenced universal grammar and how children implicitly learn some rules and then try to apply those rules. However, that said, she referred to how children are ready for L1 and L2 explicit learning from first class (6–7 years old). She showed a preference for explicit learning because it is a faster means to learn grammar and therefore the language.

She expressed that teachers should use English grammar to teach Irish grammar and use English to explain and highlight the similarities and differences.

Do you think it is appropriate to be teaching grammar to children?

Well actually children are very good language learners because they take the rules that they already know and apply them to new languages ... Can you give me an example of what I mean?

Well Eoin says I goed for I went or j'ai lit (because of j'ai dit) ... instead of j'ai lu ... Is that what you mean?

Yes they have the what you call it ... oh yeah universal grammar ... they are using the rules they already know and applying them to new verbs or whatever... of course he is only young.

So Paula ... on the question of age – when do you think it is appropriate to be teaching grammar?

They say after 12 they learn it faster ... is it they learn it faster or is it ... much less is expected from an 8-year-old ??? ... when you think of teaching a language First class to leaving cert = 12 years ... or if you start at 11 they learn the same amount in 6 years ... I think less is expected of younger children ... too much less – they are well capable of learning more ... The worse thing we ever did here in Ireland was to dumb everything down ... when I was at university ... I was writing essays ... nowadays you write the critique of a book in English ... They have even changed the format of the leaving cert ... you read the questions in French and answer the text in English.

That's at pass/lower level?

I don't know what level it is ... Ronan did pass level and Ciaran did higher level and they were pretty much the same ... one little text and ABC questions ... what is the point in

'dumbing down?' ... The French don't dumb down ... they fire grammar at their children and not only that they bring them to a restaurant and they are expected to behave ... a lot is expected of them.

So you think it depends on what we think they are capable of?

Yeah ... I blame American psychologists who have caused everything to be dumbed down ... I see the non-nationals who arrive here ... they have beautiful writing because children are expected to write beautifully ... when children are expected to write properly they do it ... Ronan was 6 when he went to school in Greece and he knew his calligraphy and phonics by Christmas because it was expected of him ... It is to do with expectation.

So what happens if people don't know their grammar in their first language?

Well that's the interesting thing, isn't it? You can look at America that people that go there in 40s and they can speak perfect grammar 6 years later ... they obviously had a good understanding in their first language and sorted it out in their brain and learned the grammar of their first language well and then you will also get the ones who have been in America for 20 years and still speak pigeon English ... so they are not really good language learners.

Paula was referring to the implicit learning of grammar which can happen anyway but is much more slowly. The advent of this is facilitated by those learners who are naturally good language learners.

The value of grammar

Paula identified the indispensability of grammar knowledge in language teaching to teach second languages. People can learn languages implicitly but learning grammar explicitly seemed to accelerate grammar learning in her opinion. She was referring to the declarative value of language that has become proceduralised and which is there for access when

required. Grammar is of such value that Paula regretted how much it had been oversimplified and felt that children need more consistent grammar practise in their textbooks. She referred to the sociocultural context of France and said that in France children learn their grammar from a very early age because grammar is to language as tables are to maths. She also highlighted how the Chinese learn more because much more is expected of them.

So Paula – I am just wondering your views on an explicit knowledge of grammar in the first language to learn grammar in the second. So let me word that more clearly – if a child doesn't have an explicit knowledge of grammar in his/her first language – can they learn the grammar of a second language easily?

Yes, whether they are doing it explicitly and they are actually using the rules that they already know of their first language and they are applying this knowledge to their second language or if they are doing that implicitly and they don't even know it – when you get intelligent learners in secondary school they can make links between their first and second language but most people will do it implicitly they don't even know that they are doing it – but they don't need to learn it but it is a very good discipline to have ... At present the children are not making the links between the present tense and the aimsir láithreach (Irish for the present tense) and they should be able to make that link from the grammar of their first language but it is never drawn attention to from their first language and it should be.

Well the new curriculum that is coming in someone says that we should be able to draw attention to their language in Irish.

Well no because we are supposed to be speaking Irish to them all the time – how can we draw attention to the fact that this is what we learned in Irish last week and this is it in English if we can't use the language in English in their Irish class? Because you aren't going to do it in English. It is because their explicit knowledge of their language is where it

is going to come into it big time – when they go to learn their second, third and additional languages that is where it is of use to them – they won't know that from the universal grammar.

Paula, let me give you an example ... take two scenarios. 1. Where the teacher has a fifth class and they all know their English grammar and then another where they don't know any English grammar ... Do you think the ones who have a knowledge of English grammar can learn the Irish grammar more easily?

Yes even though they have the knowledge of English grammar they should be able to learn the Irish grammar more easily – because you see in Irish schools most teachers don't have EAL learning and a knowledge of English grammar so (shouting) teachers do not know their grammar.

It appeared that from Paula's experience she felt that teachers do not know their grammar.

Teacher's own experience in learning grammar

Paula had never learned grammar during the course of her primary education and she said it had not been until she started learning French that she came to understand English grammar. It was her experience from learning French that she learned her English grammar. It may therefore be that a good understanding of grammar in any language can help you understand and learn another. It could also be that in trying to understand French grammar she sought first to relate it back to English grammar to seek its equivalent.

Paula, can I ask you when you were doing your teacher training (Hibernia course) did they check to see that you could teach grammar and that you knew it?

No not at all and I'd say luckily I learned my grammar through my French in UCD.

Was there any sort of grammar check?

No, it was presumed that you knew your grammar and that is a very poor presumption to make ... Unless you are EAL or unless you are a really good language learner and have it sorted out in your own head you aren't going to learn grammar or to be able to teach grammar just like that ... for example, what they do get when they are studying one little unit on adjectives and then they don't get it any more – it is not enough ... they don't know enough, they don't get enough practice ... I am asking them what is an adjective and they are saying to me ... what???? that's why I have them up on the wall so that I can draw their attention to them all the time ... ok so maybe they do adjectives in first class and then they do them in 2nd classes but hey, they are only doing them for a week in one unit, maybe two units ... once in beginning of book and then at end and it is only one little exercise and I mean they should have other things to be doing ... and with all the other stuff they are doing it is not actually going to stay in their brains – if the teachers weren't so overloaded with the curriculum you could do it in history ... you could draw their attention For example, the Vikings were very ???? Vicious ... vicious Vikings ... you could do it in history but the ordinary run of the mill teacher is too busy trying to get the history done ... to say anything because you are supposed to interconnect ... that's ok because if you are anything like me you can work it out. It is so much easier for them to remember what an adverb is because an adverb goes with a verb. An adjective should be called an 'adnoun' ... I don't know where they got the word 'adjective' from.

Now prepositions.

Na réamhfhocail chomhsuite (Irish for prepositions)?

They never really learn this in Irish but you obviously know what it is because you learned it in Irish ... All I remember is Tuiseal ginideach (genitive case) because the teacher used to always say to us 'Cad é seo?' (what is this?) and it wasn't until nearly I was in fifth year and no one had drawn our attention to the tuiseal ginideach until then and then I realised

'ah here that means the possessive ... and it was when I learned it in French that it clicked.

Ah, really? How did that communicate in French?

La plume de Marie 'of the' ... the feather of Marie ... like the tuiséal ginideach in Irish and then I realised it was instead of the apostrophe 's' in English.

Was any of this covered then in Hibernia course (teacher training college)?

No, there was probably a presumption that you knew your grammar.

Teacher's own experience in teaching grammar

Through her experience in teaching and because of her English as an additional language (EAL) knowledge Paula recognised both the importance and the benefit of a knowledge of grammar. When teaching, EAL learners spend a lot of time using grammar and in this way teachers become proficient in grammar. However, Paula felt that all teachers, not just EAL teachers, need to know their grammar.

So Paula, just to be clear, you are telling me that in your experience of managing teachers etc., you are saying to me that teachers do not know their grammar?

By osmosis they don't know their grammar unless they have EAL. Teachers like you and I know our grammar but the others don't make the links. When I was doing Hibernia (Teacher training) someone said we should be doing na logainmeacha (the placenames) but to explicitly do that the children are not going to make the links – someone has to draw their attention to the links. Otherwise you have two or three clever ones and they make the links, but the teacher should be able to help them to make the links by using grammar in their first language.

Paula highlighted that she felt age was not an impediment to learning grammar but that in more recent times language teaching had been ‘*dumbed down*’, in other words content had been oversimplified. This meant that much less is expected of the children when they may be capable of more complex grammar learning.

She summed it up.

Yes, whether they are doing it implicitly they are actually using the rules that they already know of their first language and they are applying this knowledge to their second language – they are doing that implicitly and they don't even know it – when you get intelligent learners in secondary school they can make links between their first and second language. At present the children are not making the links between the present tense and the aimsir láithreach (present tense) and they should be able to make that link from the grammar of their first language but it is never drawn attention to from their first language and it should be.

Affective responses to grammar

Paula highlighted how she herself liked grammar and that she had chosen a grammar module at college, which would not have been popular. She did not express dislike for grammar but conviction that teachers do not know their grammar. In her experience the only issue that she had experienced with children is the fact that she feels they are being under-challenged.

The findings of Bouffard and Sarkar (2008) concur with Paula's statement because they also suggest that young learners are able to negotiate form and do a grammatical analysis of their errors. They, too, found that children were able to use form better than was often expected of them. Harley (1998) also emphasises the need to find an appropriate means to help young learners attain linguistic accuracy in communicative language classrooms and devised pedagogical techniques that enabled young learners (8-year-olds)

to develop their metalinguistic awareness. Ellis's reviews of studies show FoF's positive effect on L2 acquisition for children aged 12 or below (2002a, p. 229). These studies suggest that without attention to form, L2 children will continue to experience problems with basic structures. Ellis (2002a) cites Harley's 319 Grade 6 early French immersion students study (1989) and Day and Shapson's 315 Grade 7 early French immersion students study (1991). Perhaps Paula's opinion corresponds with Scarcella and Higa (1982) when they say it is recommended that younger acquirers receive 'simpler' input in a block building task. Confirmed observation by Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975) foretells greater speed in fact for younger not older acquirers. Paula referred to the sociocultural context of France and said that there children are taught grammar from a very early age because of the value accorded to it within the French Educational system.

Paula was very much of the opinion, like Cummins (1978), that there is a CUP between a student's L1 and their L2. In this concept, a strong cognitive understanding in a L1 will be advantageous and is essential for a student to learn and extend their knowledge in their L2. The proficiency of content and skills gained in a person's L1, such as grammar, transfer to the L2. Paula referred to the idea of a universal grammar (Chomsky 1965) which states that all languages are based upon the same principles. Keith (2001) and Dean (2004) state that within mother tongue education, active grammar knowledge is indispensable but it needs to be taught in the classroom to bring students to the required level. Paula highlighted this. Interestingly, Paula stated that it was through her learning of French that she came to know and understand other grammars. This echoes Ó'Laoire et al.'s evidence (2000) which indicates that learners 'consciously or subconsciously draw on various sources of previous language learning in all subsequent language learning'. While admittedly stating that she is a good language learner, French as a language has a similar sentence structure to English, whereas Irish does not, so it is significantly easier to understand:

I see the big cat.

Je vois le grand chat.

Feicim an cat mór.

Paula was adamant that generally speaking, overall teachers do not know their grammar and expressed concern regarding this. She also stated that EAL teaching had given her the knowledge base required to teach grammar and that programmes such as this need to be adopted in preparing primary teachers to teach. This echoed Kennedy (1997) who stated that to prepare teachers to teach in the classroom the teacher training programme is the one factor which is viable for adaptation. Other factors which restrict teachers' teaching grammar was the fact that teachers are obliged to teach Irish through Irish. This discouraged teachers who have not the ability to do so.

Paula highlighted the difference between the broader French sociocultural context and the Irish sociocultural context in that more was expected of French children, and she felt this pushed them to learn more. Within the Irish sociocultural context, teachers are obliged to teach, e.g. Irish grammar through Irish. Paula felt that this was an impediment because using the knowledge that the children have in their first language serves to mediate the understanding of the second language. By not being allowed to use English it is making the teaching and learning of grammar very difficult. Paula seemed to appreciate Vygotsky's view (1978) that cultural tools such as grammar are internalised to become cultural tools for thinking (Davydov and Radzikhovskii, 1985).

4.4.2 Rachel

The second teacher Rachel has been teaching in a medium-sized (eight teacher) school. Rachel had been teaching for 20 years. She had majored in Irish through her Bachelor of Education degree.

The function of grammar

Rachel took a more theoretical approach to grammar knowledge, clearly highlighting that it was very much for structure. When I asked her to clarify what she had meant, she stated that grammar was very much for structuring sentences relating to any subject. She seemed to say that it was a tool for expression and writing and was referring to a prescriptive grammar. She used an example of paragraphs.

Grammar gives children an understanding of the structure and order within the language and they develop a greater appreciation of the language being studied. Lessons are structured with a definite beginning, middle and end.

Rachel, can I ask you if you were referring to grammar lessons when you made that comment in your questionnaire?

No, when children know their grammar they structure their lessons well.

Can you give me an example?

Paragraphs ... in sixth class showing the pupils that paragraphs are ways of ordering your ideas.

Ok, are there any other examples?

Well if you know what a verb is in English – then you can recognise it in Irish and then you notice it is at the beginning of the sentence and then it is easy to structure your Irish, because you know the rule is that the verb comes at the beginning of the sentence so you do it automatically and you don't have to feel your way in the dark trying to understand what that word is at the beginning of the sentence, because you understand it in its essence and then you don't have to teach it in Irish because it is automatically transferred.

So when you say you understand it in its essence – what do you mean?

You don't need to know the label verb but you need to understand what a verb is – you understand what it means ... it's like if you know what a verb is – it's an action word and then you recognise which word is actually a verb in Irish – its position in the sentence is easier to understand so then you realise that all verbs come at the beginning.

Would that be typical of a lot of grammar?

Well no, but you see it's a bit like riding a bike and the getting on a motor bike – there is some overlap in parts and the ones that are different you know what they are for – they are just called a different name ... so it's like you don't have to learn it all again.

Yes, I see what you mean ... Is it like knowing how to drive a car gives you an understanding of driving other vehicles?

Yeah.

Rachel was referring to the automatising of declarative grammar knowledge into procedural knowledge so that it may be drawn on for communicating in other languages, such as Irish – using her English to guide the translation in Irish.

So Rachel, grammar is for structure – is there any other use?

It's for communication to get our message across in all language – that's what language is for ... language evolved for communication.

But do we really need to know grammar to communicate?

Eh, yes ... I know when I was writing essays in Irish in schools I would think of what I wanted to say in English and use my understanding of the correspondence or not in Irish to try to communicate my essay on 'Bochtanas' (Poverty), for example ... it's from using the grammar incorrectly in Irish when you translate, for example Tá sé mo ... typical what kids say for ... it is mine ... but if they learn the copula 'is' and learn how it's different to English grammar that helps them learn too.

The use of grammar

Grammar was cited by Rachel as being used to communicate in another language. Without needing to know the label such as ‘verb’, preposition – it was understanding what it was in its essence, in other words having the concept without necessarily the label.

According to Rachel it is necessary to know grammar just as you get to know another language in their similar as well as different grammars. Again Rachel referred to the fact that her brother had had a good education in Latin with all the grammar and he understood more complex aspects of Irish grammar, because it had been mediated by this knowledge of Latin.

But then what happens if they don’t know the English grammar?

Well I suppose it slows up the learning because it is like a new animal for which there is no name in English, but if it’s been explained to you in English and you have an understanding of what it is, well then – it doesn’t matter if you know the name or not ... it’s its essence that is important.

So if I understand you correctly ... children need to know their grammar?

Yes, I think it helps to understand what something is generally or even better specifically.

Can I ask you if you learned grammar at school?

I didn’t learn real grammar in English ... I learned what a noun, verb, adjective and adverb was – the rest no.

Was it easy to learn Irish grammar then?

Well Irish in general was quite badly taught in primary school – the teachers drilled Irish into you and nothing was really about understanding – it was about just knowing. What’s more they didn’t even use any English so you really didn’t know what you were learning ...

I understood the verbs and the adjectives but learning the declensions in Irish was torture ... I used to have a sick stomach going to school because Mrs Shelby was so cross if you didn't know your declensions off by heart ... she'd really embarrass you ... and I was in fifth year at that stage. My brother, who did Latin in school, understood what the declensions were because he had been taught what he was doing.

So he understood grammar from having learned it through another language?

Well I think English was used to explain and more than likely the concept has to be explained in English for the Latin to make sense.

The value of grammar

Rachel highlighted the value of a knowledge of one grammar to support the learning of another in her references to understanding grammar in its essence and then, when an aspect of grammar is encountered in another language, it is identifiable and easier to understand.

Well if you know what a verb is in English – then you can recognise it in Irish and then you notice it is at the beginning of the sentence and then it is easy to structure your Irish because you know the rule is that the verb comes at the beginning of the sentence, so you do it automatically and you don't have to feel your way in the dark trying to understand what that word is at the beginning of the sentence, because you understand it in its essence and then you don't have to teach it in Irish because it is automatically transferred.

So when you say you understand it in its essence – what do you mean?

You don't need to know the label verb but you need to understand what a verb is – you understand what it means ... it's like if you know what a verb is – it's an action word and then you recognise which word is actually a verb in Irish – its position in the sentence is easier to understand, so then you realise that all verbs come at the beginning.

Would that be typical of a lot of grammar?

Well no, but you see it's a bit like riding a bike and the getting on a motor bike – there is some overlap in parts and the ones that are different you know what they are for – they are just called a different name ... so its like you don't have to learn it all again.

Yes, that is well put ... Is it like knowing how to drive a car gives you an understanding of driving other vehicles?

Yeah.

Teacher's own experience in learning grammar

Rachel learned the basics in grammar: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. However, with the way that Irish was taught it was impossible to understand any grammar. Irish had to be learned and regurgitated and there was no explaining done or understood as it had all been done through Irish. Rachel remembered having similar experiences in secondary school.

Can I ask you if you learned grammar at school?

I didn't learn real grammar in English ... I learned what a noun, verb, adjective and adverb was – the rest no.

Was it easy to learn Irish grammar then?

Well Irish in general was quite badly taught in primary school – the teachers drilled Irish into you and nothing was really about understanding – it was about just knowing. What's more they didn't even use any English so you really didn't know what you were learning ... I understood the verbs and the adjectives but learning the declensions in Irish was torture ... I used to have a sick stomach going to school because Mrs Shelby was so cross if you didn't know your declensions off by heart ... she'd really embarrass you ... and I was in fifth year at that stage.

And again in third level.

Were you taught grammar at college?

Ah, no ... but I remember the look of shock on the French lecturer's face when one of the teachers in her seminar did not know what an adjective was.

How did it come about that the French lecturer discovered that?

It was during a French seminar – she was teaching adverbs and the teacher put her hand up and asked what an adjective was.

So there was no grammar check at all?

Not a bit. I majored in Irish in my degree – it was the subject I took and there was never a word of English used ... this is an effort to get you fluent.

I suppose at college we can understand the importance of exposing the teachers to the language they may not hear otherwise.

Teacher's own experience in teaching grammar

If Rachel is not familiar with a grammar item she researches it so that she can teach it. She had not been taught grammar in college.

Do you feel confident teaching grammar?

Well I teach what I have to and if I don't understand it I check it beforehand. I know enough to get by at primary school and I suppose ideally people should be given what they need at college to do their job ... but I presume they think that it should be all known by then ... so maybe it is back to the primary school curriculum to make sure that grammar is being taught properly.

Is it not, though, as important to make sure that teachers know grammar to teach in both languages?

Yes, that's true – I'll teach only what I am obliged to if I don't know something really well. Teachers who love maths maybe spend more time teaching maths and teachers who know English spend lots of time teaching it because they really enjoy it.

Affective responses to grammar

Confidence in grammar teaching was important for Rachel and when she did not feel confident about teaching an element of grammar, she would have to research a topic to understand it before she taught it. In this sociocultural context the teachers seem to be saying that the government needs to address what seems to be a recognised practice, i.e. teachers have to train themselves in grammar, which is not practicable.

Do you feel confident teaching grammar?

Well I teach what I have to and if I don't understand it I check it beforehand. I know enough to get by at primary school and I suppose ideally people should be given what they need at college to do their job ... but I presume they think that it should be all known by then ... so maybe it is back to the primary school curriculum to make sure that grammar is being taught properly.

Is it not, though, as important to make sure that teachers know grammar to teach in both languages?

Yes, that's true – I'll teach only what I am obliged to if I don't know something really well. Teachers who love maths maybe spend more time teaching maths and teachers who know English spend lots of time teaching it because they really enjoy it.

Rachel highlighted how teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical skills also impact on how they teach (Bandura, 1997). Teachers' self-perceptions of their knowledge of grammar determine their pedagogical decisions and use (Borg, 2001; Brumfit et al.,

1996). Teachers tend to avoid teaching grammar due to their lack of certainty about their own knowledge (Borg, 2001; Beard, 1999; Grossman et al., 1989). There is a need for subject-matter content knowledge among language teachers which would include grammar-matter content (Shulman, 1986). Rachel also echoed Cummins's CUP theory (1978) in her anecdote about her brother understanding grammar through having learned Latin.

Rachel echoed Vygotsky's reference to grammar being internalised to become cultural tools for thinking (1978). Grammar is a means to think about language through language. She referred to this knowledge as being the 'essence' (Rogoff, 1990). Negueruela Azarola (2003) also supports this because grammar is a means to think about language through language also comes to mind. Leont'ev (1978), a peer of Vygotsky, referred to this use of cultural tools such as grammar. The issue and the problem of the emphasis on teaching Irish through Irish was reiterated by Rachel. In this sociocultural context the government needs to address what seems to be a recognised defeatist practice by the teachers I interviewed. In the context of the classroom, sociocultural theory in L2 acquisition can be practised through social activities that simulate the cultural context of the language.

4.4.3 Marcus

The third teacher Marcus is a teacher in his twenties who has been teaching for eight years in an average size primary school in a rural area. He had studied English through his primary teaching degree.

The function of grammar

Marcus emphasised that grammar was important for communication in line with the communicative approach. I asked him if we could not make ourselves understood without learning grammar and he emphasised the prescriptive element of grammar, stating that it

was important to speak correctly and that this had to be learned, particularly as in this era of technology he feels that correct grammar and spelling have been downgraded.

Grammar is important for communication. It helps us to express ourselves correctly. It is an essential component of communication; a means of getting across our message and in turn for people to understand what we mean.

Do we need to know grammar in English to communicate? Is it not automatic?

Well correct grammar assists in expression, articulation and to show a measure of education. So it is necessary to know correct grammar to make oneself understood in a more correct way. This won't necessarily come automatically.

The use of grammar

Marcus was quite sure that a knowledge of grammar in one language helped to understand another both in comparison and in contrast.

Do you think understanding grammar in English helps you to understand it more in Irish?

Absolutely, even if it's not the same – the contrast helps you to learn it and it is by referring it back to what you know already.

The value of grammar

Marcus deemed that the way a person used grammar correctly was a measure of their intelligence. He associated prescriptive grammar with education.

So you associate grammar very much with correctness?

Well yes because children are overexposed to slang. In a society addicted to speed and instant gratification, 'proper' language has been downgraded as being out-of-date. Look at how texting has downgraded language. Letter writing, future CV's and professional emails

were held to rely on correct grammar as a measure of a person's education and intelligence. Good grammar equals good quality work and fluency in any language is impossible without mastery of the grammar.

Teacher's own experience in learning grammar

During the course of his own education, Marcus had been taught in some classes but not in others. In fact, a lot of his learning had been self-taught.

Were you taught grammar during your primary school years?

I was taught in some classes and not others ... a lot of what I know was self-taught.

Teacher's own experience in teaching grammar

Marcus taught grammar as it arose and having observed his lesson I deduced he is a teacher who thinks it is important to know the mechanics of language, and so he teaches grammar as needed and integrates it in other lesson as it arises.

Do you think you should have been taught grammar?

Yes, as you can see in my lesson I teach grammar as it arises – it comes into lots of lessons – not just a specific 'English grammar' lesson.

Yes, there was a lot of grammar and the children have a good grasp of aspects of grammar and they enjoy learning it.

Affective responses to grammar

Marcus was very conscious of using correct grammar and he associated prescriptive grammar with evidence of academic attainment. This was very much for creating a good impression. This would seem to convey that grammar was important to impress others and

distinguish oneself by the education that it seemed to convey. Marcus had respect for grammar, integrating it with and through other lessons. He had not been taught grammar in primary school. Marcus, like Paula, is concerned that the sociocultural environment in which the pupils find themselves has downgraded language through messaging, and grammar and language have been compromised. He stresses the need to teach “proper” language as a measure of showing good education. Ellis’s review of studies (2002a, p. 229) shows FoF’s positive effect on L2 acquisition for children aged 12 or below. These studies suggest that without attention to form, L2 children will continue to experience problems with basic structures. Keith (2001) and Dean (2004) state that within mother tongue education, active grammar knowledge is indispensable but it needs additional classroom attention to bring students to the required standard.

Marcus highlighted the communicative approach to learning grammar in that CLT is fundamentally concerned with semantics and ‘making meaning’ in the language, by conveying one’s message, inferring someone else’s or negotiating when meaning is unclear (Musumeci, 1997). Spada (2007, p. 275) clarifies this by calling the thought that ‘Communicative Language Teaching means an exclusive focus on meaning’ a myth or a misconception. Grammar is very much a part of the communicative approach.

The shared belief of Widdowson (1983) and Hymes (1972) that children acquire not only a knowledge of grammar, but also a knowledge of sociocultural rules, such as when to speak, when not to speak, what to talk about to whom and in what manner, at the same time as they acquire knowledge of grammatical rules was recalled here. Marcus had the motivation to study grammar himself if he felt that it was needed in his teaching. This was how strongly he felt it should be taught.

Marcus was very clear that knowledge of grammar in English supported the knowledge of grammar in another language both in comparison and in contrast. Vygotsky (1987) emphasised the key role of a person’s first language in the learning of a second.

4.5 Phase Four: Classroom observation

The fourth phase, which involved three classroom observations, allowed me to consider two teachers holistically, paying particular attention to studying their statements and also to explore the significance of context. I observed, via classroom teaching, two lessons in English and one in Irish with a view to reporting how a knowledge of English grammar may be used to teach languages within the Irish context.

The coding of classroom observations followed a different pattern, one which took a more holistic approach than the Phase One analysis, in order to incorporate more contextual detail. This process focused on the second research question, which was understanding the role of a knowledge of English grammar in teaching in the Irish context because the purpose of the research is to establish to what extent teachers may need a knowledge of English grammar to teach languages in the Irish context.

Firstly, the notes of lesson observations were summarised to produce a description of to what extent grammar (directly and indirectly) was used in the lesson, detailing the lesson, main activities, use of grammar and (explanations of grammar) in the observed lessons. Plans of the classrooms are to be found in Appendix 18. The observation schedule is to be seen in Appendix 19.

I allowed a short period of scanning before the lesson began and in attempt to see all that could be seen (Delamont, 1992). In this way, it could reduce potential for distraction, in that I had my focus on the actual classroom lesson and so increased my chance for observing and recording everything, while simultaneously paying close attention to a selective set of phenomena. I drew a room layout, recorded timing of events and verbatim speech. I recorded a classroom plan and displays and resources. The displays and resources were very important in the context. This evidence would enable readers to become familiar with the setting. Seventy per cent of display relates to the Irish language in the form of pronouns, nouns, verbs, expressions and labels. This would be very typical

of the sociocultural context in Ireland in general, as formerly Irish was deemed to be the most important subject on the curriculum. Irish had been assigned the maximum teaching time in the curriculum and was integrated into most subjects during the school day. Irish grammar display materials were more evident than those for English grammar, confirming the prominence given to the Irish language. This validated the value articulated by all teachers on the importance of knowing grammar.

When the lesson began the focus of my observation was instances of grammar which directly and indirectly arose in the lesson. I tallied these and also watched for children's response, interaction, comprehension and interest. Patton (1990, p. 217) outlines how observation may vary according to the role of the observer, the degree to which those observed know the purpose of the observation, and the duration and the focus of the observation.

I engaged in a semi-structured observation as I was there to view teachers' use of grammar in their teaching. While some grammar analysis was quantifiable (e.g. incidental arising of FoF, incidents of corrective feedback), the data was mainly qualitative. While I was looking for specifics, there are also the incidences of other useful events, such as if a teacher engages in corrective feedback.

4.5.1 First observation

The first observation took place in the early afternoon as this was the time that the teacher had suggested. Interviews are a privilege afforded to us (Denzin, 2001). It was with a large co-educational group (mixed gender) of sixth (final year primary school pupils aged 11–12). The teacher had asked me questions about my research. As he was aware that it was grammar related, there could have been an element of romancing the researcher by showing what the class knew rather than grammar emerging more spontaneously. However, this was perceived as being advantageous in that it was a short cut for me to

accessing the depth of their grammar knowledge because he would not have had the time to coach them for the lesson observation.

This was an English poetry lesson. The pupils were sitting in a rectangular ‘U’ format which made the classroom intimate/inclusive. The lesson began with a recap of the previous week’s work on prefixes; it involved the teacher defining a word and seeking the answer from various children. This worked very well and the children displayed very good understanding and knowledge of prefixes. They were comfortable with this standard of grammar. The lesson continued with the introduction of the poem. Grammatical items encountered included verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The teacher was explicit and sought synonyms for the verbs encountered in the poem. The children offered good synonyms and the lesson progressed. The lesson finished with a discussion of the poem and what the words might mean. Overall I noted the direct and indirect references to grammar and these were significant, as noted in Table 4.2 below. However, while grammar featured in the lesson I noted in my reflective diary that it was not necessary to teach the poetry lesson, although the lesson could be perceived as being a better lesson because it contained more academic or learning material. In addition, judging by the amount of Irish grammar content (which was being taught in Irish) on the walls of the classroom, having the corresponding knowledge in English would facilitate the learning of the grammatical concept in Irish.

Table 4.2 Observation lesson 1

School A	Date	Time	Class	Direct (X) and indirect (O) references to grammar
	Observation 3 February 2014	2.00 pm	Sixth class, 22 pupils	
Lesson: English comprehension	Theme: Poetry	Duration: 45 mins		Xxxxxxxxxxxxxo xxxxxxx

Classroom: Sixth	Display homonyms Synonyms genitive case singular, plural Gaeilge: verbs, possessions, labelling	Layout: Rectangular desks in circular format towards the top of the room where there is a whiteboard, pc screen and teacher desk		
Grammar arising	Direct: Recap of previous week's lesson on prefixes	Indirect: Reference to verbs, adverbs, adjectives		
Teacher use	Direct: Good understanding and use.	Indirect: Spellings		
Pupil responses	Very engaged, good knowledge of recap already			
Additional info.	Teacher and children are comfortable with old and new grammar			

This teacher had made 21 references to grammar in the course of this lesson. It was an English lesson (not a grammar lesson) and while the main emphasis was on the poem itself (theme, tone and imagery), the teacher used a lot of grammar knowledge within the lesson. The standard of grammar was not basic. The lesson very much necessitated a knowledge of grammatical items such as prefixes, suffixes, synonyms, homonyms, similes and metaphors. If a teacher had not had this grammar knowledge, the grammar element of the lesson could not have occurred. This observed lesson was mainly teacher centred with a traditional approach to grammar teaching. The teacher provided cues and asked lots of questions to elicit responses from the students on their knowledge of grammar items- prefixes and suffixes. The teacher integrated the grammar into speaking and then a written

activity was used at the end to draw the grammatical elements and vocabulary of the lessons together. Marcus' class was a class where grammar was very much in use and where what he was doing in English was supporting the chart content (learning materials) of Irish on the walls and therefore the learning of Irish. I left his room with a strong impression that English grammar and Irish grammar knowledge were supporting each other. The particularity of the Irish context whereby Irish and English have been given equal weighting within the curriculum would mean that English and Irish support each other. When I questioned him about this he invited me back to observe an Irish lesson, which is represented in the next observation, with a different class because it was during the course of the following school year.

4.5.2 Second observation

The second observation took place in the early morning the following year and therefore with a different class. The morning time is the time when most teachers teach Irish. This would be typical of all schools and is traditional in the sociocultural context. The class group was a large mixed gender group of 5th class primary school pupils (aged 10–11). This was a '*Drámaíocht Gaeilge*' lesson (Irish drama). The children were enacting an extract from Gaeilge literature which they had been studying over a number of weeks. The pupils were sitting in a rectangular 'U' format, which made the classroom inclusive (Appendix 18). I noticed a lot of the class displays were in Irish grammar, e.g. irregular verbs, '*Nathanna cainte*' (expressions in Irish) and sayings (70% of the classroom displays), as well as mathematical tools – formulae and English punctuation, e.g. when to use 's/s'. The lesson began with a recap of some previous work. This was done through a game which involved the pupils engaging in an action and one of two teams had to articulate in Irish what they were, e.g. *ag preabadh* (jumping), *ag dreapadoireacht* (climbing), *ag sleamhnán* (sliding). The children enjoyed this and they were taking notes

in a notebook of any words that they had not previously known. They did this automatically so that they were noting verbs in Irish. The lesson continued with the acting of the drama. They had previously done it, so there was someone whose turn it was to begin by narrating. The teacher came to a word and asked the class to give him a synonym for the same. The pupils were using Irish comfortably. The lesson progressed with the class taking turns at presenting a short story. It was completed by the pupils writing some answers to questions based on what they had done. The pupils were very comfortable with writing in Irish and seemed to very much enjoy the lesson and the variety of work completed within the class time showed that the pupils were very much at ease with Irish and Irish grammar. The teacher used mostly Irish to teach Irish but he used some English also. He tried to follow regulations regarding Irish to be taught through Irish; however, even though they were an older class (who had been exposed to Irish for a longer period than their younger school peers), the teacher resorted to English to explain. This supports the view put forward by Rachel that '*teaching Irish through Irish is difficult*'. Marcus resorted to English when necessary.

This observed lesson was also teacher centred (reflecting Marcus' style) with a traditional approach to grammar teaching. The teacher provided cues and did lots of actions to elicit responses from the students from their knowledge of grammar. The teacher integrated the grammar into speaking and then a written activity was used at the end to draw the grammatical elements and vocabulary of the lessons together. This lesson showed that grammar is a feature of Irish lessons and it can be taught in simple ways such as by actions and games. At the end of this lesson I noted in my reflective diary that perhaps a knowledge of grammar in any language could support the learning of another grammar. If the children had not been taught the vocabulary categorised in grammatical items it may have resulted in learning without understanding.

Table 4.3 Observation lesson 2

School B1	Date	Time	Class	Direct (X) and indirect (O) references to grammar
	Observation 5 November 2014, 10.15 am (Irish lesson)	10.15 am	5th class, 20 pupils	
Lesson: Irish drama	Drámaíocht (Drama)	Duration: 45 mins		XXXXXXXXXXXXXO XXXXXXX
Classroom: Fifth	Sayings; orders; seanfhocail; grammar rules, 70% of wall coverings relate to Irish grammar	Layout: Rectangular desks in linear format top of the room where there is a blackboard, pc screen and teacher desk	Actions used to teach grammar	
Grammar arising	Knowledge	Indirect		
Teacher use	Direct: Good understanding and use	Indirect: Spellings		
Pupil responses	Interested, good knowledge of recap already			
Additional info.	Teacher and children are comfortable with old and new grammar			

4.5.3 Third observation

The third observation took place in mid-morning. The class group was a mixed gender group of 4th class primary school pupils (aged 9–10). Like in the previous school, there was a significant amount of grammar on the walls both English and Irish grammar. The Irish grammar charts were attractively displayed with colourful pictures to support non-linguistic understanding. The lesson was an English comprehension lesson. It involved the children reading a comprehension and answering questions on it. The grammatical lesson was homonyms, which arose naturally through the text at the end of the comprehension questions. The teacher began the lesson by recapping on synonyms which they had studied the previous week and it involved the teacher seeking a synonym for a word that she called out. The children had a good grasp of synonyms and were able to comprehend and volunteer examples of. After testing the children on the previous week's work the teacher put up the proposed answers to the questions she had asked on the overhead projector. She then introduced homonyms, which the children had studied the previous year but not in the current class. There was an exercise on homonyms at the end of the comprehension questions which was easily completed by all. The exercises were perhaps too easy as Paula had stated when she referred to there often being a lack of challenge in grammar activities.

This observed lesson was also teacher-centred with a traditional approach to grammar teaching. The teacher involved the children to elicit responses on their knowledge of grammar. The teacher integrated the grammar into the lesson and then finished with a written activity to draw the grammatical elements of the lessons together.

Seeing the teachers teach in context gave good insight into the broad sociocultural context and evidence that Irish as a language is still very much emphasised for cultural reasons. Irish expressions and language are very much incorporated into the school day, irrespective of whether the lessons are in English or Irish. The classroom displays Irish grammar and teachers are teaching it. This particular teacher emphasised English grammar

and with that there was also a visual emphasis on Irish grammar. It would seem necessary, therefore, that this knowledge of English grammar was supporting the knowledge of Irish grammar.

Table 4.4 Observation lesson 3

School B2	Date Observation 5 February 2015, 11.15 am (Irish Lesson)	Time 11.15 am	Class 5th class, 29 pupils	Direct (X) and indirect (O) references to grammar
Lesson: English comprehension and grammar	Homonyms and synonyms	Duration: 40 mins		Xxxxxxxxxxxxxo xxxxxxx
Classroom: Fifth	Sayings; orders; seanfhocail; grammar rules, verbs, 90% of wall coverings relate to Irish grammar	Layout: Rectangular desks in linear form at top of the room where there is a blackboard, pc screen and teacher desk		
Grammar arising	Knowledge	Indirect		
Teacher use	Direct: Good understanding and use	Indirect: Spellings		
Pupil responses	Engaged , quite interested and showed good grammar knowledge			
Additional info.				

4.6 Conclusion

The findings have echoed a number of trends in teachers' perspectives which concur with previous research. Teachers understand that grammar is a means to communicate orally and in writing. Most teachers hold a traditional view of grammar as a tool for precision in expressing oneself and although they appreciate that it is an important element of education, they do not have a sociocultural understanding of grammar learning. They do not consider the functional use of grammar as a means to understand language through language. Not only is this significant from a conceptual point of view, i.e. grammar is a means to understand language through language but, in addition, it is significant in learning additional languages in the application of concepts in the mother tongue to second language equivalents.

This research shows that some teachers have not experienced grammar through their own education nor through college. When teachers lack grammar knowledge/understanding they may also lack the motivation or reasoning for teaching grammar, because this research, mirroring previous research findings, clearly demonstrates that teachers are more likely to be influenced by what they experience or believe to be effective teaching than they are by what they are directed to do. The majority of teachers feel that a knowledge of English grammar supports the teaching of Irish as a second language in the Irish context. Teachers feel that teaching Irish through Irish is difficult and challenging. All teachers in this research felt grammar teaching was appropriate with primary school pupils. Some teachers felt the children were capable of learning much more than they are being given.

5 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study has, for the first time, looked at the role of a knowledge of English grammar in the second language teaching of Irish. The findings in this study mirror trends in teachers' perspectives which concur with previous research, e.g. teachers are more likely to be influenced by what they experience or believe to be effective teaching than they are by what they are directed to do (Pajares, 1992). Both Marcus and Paula confirmed this in their interviews. This was also explicitly stated by Paula and confirmed in the classroom observation of Marcus when he resorted to English during an Irish language lesson. Even though teachers are not allowed to introduce reading before first class, Paula was adamant that she was not going to 'hold back' a child because of directives, if the child was ready to read. She was motivated by what she perceived to be effective teaching.

5.2 The findings

The findings are summarised as follows:

1. There is a lack of professional knowledge with regard to both linguistic subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge relating to L1 and L2 grammar teaching. This is because teachers were not necessarily taught L1 and L2 grammar through their own primary education.
2. Grammar is viewed as an important element of language teaching in the Irish context. There was robust and unanimous support for the importance of grammar in language education. Every teacher expressed the view that it is important to learn English grammar to a greater or lesser extent. The majority of teachers expressed the view that a knowledge of English grammar would support the teaching of Irish as a second language in the Irish context.

3. Teachers have a more restrictive view of grammar as a tool for precision in expressing oneself. While teachers state that grammar is a means to communicate orally and in writing, they do not have a sociocultural understanding of grammar learning.
4. There seems to be professional ambiguity about the place of grammar in the English language curriculum in Ireland. Teachers who took part in this research suggested that L1 grammar serves as a bridge to formal academic language in helping pupils acquire the language that is required in formal academic settings.
5. All teachers who took part in this research felt grammar teaching was appropriate with primary school pupils. Some teachers felt the children were capable of much more grammar learning than they are being taught through the curriculum.
6. Teachers feel that teaching Irish through Irish only is not effective. Most teachers do not have the required level of Irish to teach grammatical concepts through Irish and children do not understand Irish well enough to learn it through Irish.
7. Few teachers in this study experienced L1 or L2 grammar through teacher training.

5.3 The findings: recommendations

1. Language education policy needs to incorporate L1 and L2 grammar learning in its teacher preparation for L2 teaching because teachers lack linguistic subject knowledge.
2. Grammar (L1 and L2) is an important element of language teaching in the Irish context and needs to be written more prominently into policy documents such as the curriculum guidelines.

3. Teachers also need a sociocultural understanding of grammar.
4. Curriculum needs to incorporate a more structured and mandatory grammar syllabus at primary level.
5. Grammar learning is relevant with primary children and the primary language syllabus needs to include grammar.
6. The mandatory use of Irish to teach only Irish could be reviewed to allow for use of the mother tongue when teaching aspects of Irish grammar.
7. Teacher training colleges should find a way to verify that teachers know grammar.

5.3.1 Linguistic subject knowledge

It seems that grammar needs to be written more prominently into policy documents such as the curriculum guidelines. Teachers lack linguistic subject knowledge. This research shows that most teachers have not necessarily nor consistently been taught grammar through their own primary education nor through college. Within this small study there was a great variation in teachers' own grammar education, from one teacher not having any grammar education to one teacher having 'one good year' to another being self-taught. Those who had experienced grammar had often done so by chance, depending on the teacher they had teaching them. In addition, grammar was not consistently taught through their primary education. Eight of the fifteen questionnaire respondents had encountered grammar learning in the course of their own primary education. The ongoing problem facing teachers who do not have adequate explicit knowledge of grammar has long been recognised (Beard, 2000). In addition, of the eight teachers who stated that they had been taught grammar in school, one described learning grammar through modern foreign languages, and another described negative experiences of learning through exercises and drilling. The impact of this lack of positive experiences of learning about grammar in

school reflects the importance of teachers' own experiences of schooling for their pedagogical practice (Hadjioannou and Hutchinson, 2010).

Some teachers, as evidenced from a teacher in this study, assume to develop their linguistic knowledge, as is indicated by one who described himself as 'self-taught'. This occurrence would depend on a teacher's subjective preference and motivation to do the same. This finding also resonates with a summary of evidence from subject surveys (excluding English and mathematics) carried out by Ofsted (2007/08) whereby it was noted that having a teacher with specific subject knowledge was often a matter of chance.

5.3.2 Grammar is an important element of language teaching in the Irish context

Teachers in this study unanimously agreed on the importance of grammar. Given that two languages are being taught in primary school, teachers in the Irish context require preparation in L2 teaching and learning, and grammar is an element of this. Teacher training needs to emphasise English grammar for English and Irish teaching through its pedagogy in this particular sociocultural context. Further research featuring the support of Irish teaching by English language knowledge in the Irish context would also be desirable. There has been a recognition in the English context that if teachers do not know grammar, they cannot teach something that they themselves do not know. Through the literacy skills proficiency test, grammar has been recognised as an indispensable element of literacy. The English curriculum (2014) in England requires teachers to teach grammar specifics mandatorily and provides an online resource called Englicious for primary and secondary teachers to support their teaching. The course supports understanding the basic concepts of English grammar, as laid out in the National Curriculum, and it helps to develop a stronger command of key English grammar terminology, as used in the National Curriculum. Resources include lesson plans, exercises and projects that can be carried out with the

pupils. Englicious is structured around the National Curriculum (2014) in England, and provides access to the most recent research and training from University College London academic experts in the field of English grammar. It develops confidence in using grammatical terminology, improves ability to analyse the grammar of texts; and assists in the use of grammar to improve pupils' reading and writing skills. An extract from the Curriculum of England (2014) is to be found in Appendix 16.

5.3.3 A sociocultural understanding of grammar

Teachers in this study have a more restricted view of grammar as a tool for precision in expressing oneself. While teachers acknowledged that grammar is a means to communicate orally and in writing, they lacked a sociocultural understanding of grammar teaching (Vygotsky, 1978) even though the communicative approach to language teaching is being employed to teach languages in the Irish classroom and might lend itself to taking more note of sociocultural contexts.

Often, when teachers hear the term 'grammar', they understand it as a restrictive method of teaching grammar, as prescriptive or accuracy-focused based on the learning of rules. They rarely consider the functional use of grammar as a means to understand language through language. Language teaching which focuses on the interpretation and creation of meaning, presents language as a system of personal engagement with a new world, where learners necessarily engage with diversity at a personal level. Learning language as a complex personal communication system involves ongoing investigation of language as a dynamic system and of the way it works to create and convey meanings. This is significant from a conceptual point of view, i.e. understanding that grammar is a means to understand language through language, but, in addition, it is significant in learning additional languages, in the application of concepts in the mother tongue to second language equivalents. This is the CUP referred to by Cummins (1978) and the transfer of

information across languages. There is a perception that when grammar is the exclusive focus of classroom time that the classroom is focused on metalinguistic knowledge which is monopolised by complex linguistic elaborations that have little application to communicative contexts (Omaggio Hadley, 1997).

When teachers have appropriate grammar knowledge to teach with a sociocultural understanding, they will have the tools of the trade as well as an understanding that tools such as grammar become internalised and become tools for thinking. In the Irish primary classroom where teachers teach two languages, teachers need to have a functional understanding of grammar. This involves understanding that grammar in its parts (irrespective of what language is used) relates that to the whole meaning communicated. It is irrespective of what order the grammar comes in different languages, having the foundation in one language mediates the understanding of another language's grammar. It is the conceptual understanding that goes beyond understanding corresponding grammatical items but rather Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is able to relate grammatical knowledge with knowledge of the whole texts and their structure.

It would be beneficial for teachers to understand that the most significant sociocultural tool is language because it is used to teach all tool use and it is vital in the process of developing higher psychological functions (Karpov, 2003; Rogoff, 1990). Mediator tools such as grammar are first seen externally as the expert teaches the learner how to use the grammar tool and then internally as the learner begins to use the tool, i.e. grammar in performing other activities. In the internalisation process the tools modify and transform the learner's thought processes as they begin to use these new tools to express their thinking.

5.3.4 The curriculum needs to incorporate a more structured and mandatory grammar syllabus

The implications for policy are that a clear place for grammar should be set out that should then be reflected in the curriculum, which from a sociocultural point of view is the enactment of the policy. While the new language curriculum (2016) in Ireland has recognised that knowledge of grammar in a first language supports a second language grammar learning, there needs to be more precise guidelines in place as there are, for example, with the English curriculum (2014) in England. The curriculum presents the enactment of the policies which support the teaching and learning of the pupils in the Irish context.

5.3.5 Grammar learning is relevant with primary children

Nassaji and Fotos (2011) state that explicit teaching of grammar (in learners' L1 or L2) before and/or after meaning-based communicative activities is helpful. All of the teachers who took part in this research stated that grammar with primary children was relevant. One of the most powerful arguments for SFG is its potential as a resource for children's learning. This is because SFG is able to relate grammatical knowledge to knowledge of the whole texts and their structure.

5.3.6 The mandatory use of only Irish to teach Irish could be reviewed

The Department of Education obliges teachers to teach Irish grammar through Irish. This study seems to suggest that to teach Irish grammar through Irish requires a good understanding of English grammar. Teaching Irish grammar through Irish is a difficult task, particularly if teachers have little or no grammar understanding and knowledge in their first language. Teachers feel that teaching Irish using Irish only is not always effective. Teaching content in the form of concepts and language through a language in which the

pupils have limited proficiency is not easy (Genesee, 1994). Teaching Irish through Irish is mandatory. Teachers' awareness of English grammar has been found to be inconsistent. From the findings in this research, it would seem that teacher preparation needs to incorporate more L2 teaching with an emphasis on Irish as a second language in the Irish context. Ideally, this should ensure that teacher graduates would have the grammar tool to equip them for teaching grammar in the Irish context. L2 grammar teaching can and should be facilitated by grammar knowledge in the first language during the lesson. Cameron (2015, p. 199) sums this up when she says: 'Use as much of the target language as possible and ensure the use of the first language supports the child's language learning.'

5.3.7 Grammar and teacher training

Policy needs to incorporate grammar learning in its teacher preparation for L2 teaching. Teachers lack pedagogical understanding of how grammar in one language can further support the learning of another. Koln and Hancock (2005) state that the largest hurdle for substantial change is the appalling lack of training for teachers and prospective teachers in the American context. This seems relevant to the Irish context because the findings of this study suggest that teachers' knowledge base and training needs to be supported in the area of grammar teaching, improving primary teachers' subject knowledge across the language curriculum.

While acknowledging that increasing language teachers' explicit knowledge about grammar through teacher education will not necessarily lead to more effective instruction (Borg, 2003a), it could be more likely that a teacher would be able to teach grammar. Teachers need not only a declarative knowledge of grammar (Shulman, 1986) but also a grammatical pedagogical content knowledge of how grammatical constructions create meaning in order to promote more effective teaching. It is appropriate that a starting point in teaching grammar should be a knowledge of grammar to teach, i.e teachers need a

personal understanding of the subject matter (Wilson et al., 1987). Therefore, teachers need more than an explicit knowledge of grammar. To develop pupils' understanding of grammar, teachers generally require a specialised understanding or knowledge which is knowledge of the subject matter and, in addition, they need knowledge of how to help their students understand the subject matter.

Although the distinction of knowledge of the subject matter from knowledge of the subject matter for teaching has a long history going back to Dewey (1904), researchers are still undecided as to what constitutes a professional knowledge base for teaching, either in theoretical or in empirical terms. At present, courses designed to prepare trainee teachers for the profession are built on the assumption that entrants have adequate subject matter knowledge and that therefore the aim of teacher training courses is to equip entrants with the appropriate generic pedagogical skills (Feiman-Nemser and Parker, 1990). A paper entitled '150 ways of knowing' (Wilson et al., 1987) highlighted a need for a renewed emphasis on subject matter knowledge as part of beginner teachers pre-service programmes of training. In addition, teachers also need to know how to transform this knowledge into effective pedagogy (Grossman, 1989). Teachers need, therefore, to know grammar to teach it in the curriculum, both the content knowledge and the curriculum knowledge (Shulman, 1987, p. 8), and also grammatical pedagogical content knowledge of how grammatical constructions make meaning. Therefore teachers need more than just a declarative knowledge of grammar (Shulman, 1986). More effective measures in teacher training would need to be put in place to compensate for any current and future shortfall in grammar knowledge base. Policy needs to incorporate teacher preparation for L2 teaching.

Kennedy (1997) recommended that teacher training programmes need to be adapted to prepare teachers to teach in the classroom. Focus on grammar teaching during the teacher training programme could raise awareness and understanding of the role of grammar. It would also serve to ensure that teachers have the grammar knowledge base

they need not only to teach grammar but to be more confident in teaching grammar, and it would also support a different didactical approach in the classroom. From a sociocultural point of view teachers' understanding will be mediated by their own experiences, values, etc. Elmore (1996) argues that changing the structures of schooling will have little impact on how and what students learn unless there are also changes in the 'core' of educational practice (i.e. how teachers understand knowledge and learning and how they operationalise their understandings).

In England it has been recognised that it is important to know grammar as a prerequisite to enter into teacher training. Teachers are required to sit a literacy skills proficiency test. The test may be criticised in that it tests applicants' implicit knowledge of grammar based on an accepted norm so that if they get it right they may not be able to explain why. It does nothing to raise explicit knowledge about grammar. Teacher training in Ireland needs to look at how teachers' explicit grammar knowledge may be tested prior to entering college. Within college any shortfall could be addressed through a syllabus which as well as raising grammatical awareness ensures teachers know grammar. This study has strongly suggested that teachers need to know grammar for first and second language teaching.

Grammar is also necessary for the conceptual benefit that is promoted by grammatical awareness. It is more significant in the Irish context where teachers teach two languages.

6 CONCLUSION

In concluding this small-scale sociocultural study into the role of grammar in L2 teaching in the Irish context, the elements that underpin the findings are drawn together within an explanatory framework, therefore presenting the implications of these insights. An evaluation is presented of the methodology, the findings in relation to classroom teaching, sociocultural theorising and the potential for future research. Finally, possible links are established between the findings from this small sample of teachers and those within the wider population.

6.1 Synthesis of the research findings

The findings of this research reveal that understanding English grammar supports the teaching of Irish in the Irish context. Teachers were undisputed in their belief that a knowledge of both English and Irish grammar is important. A focus on grammar is referred to in the *Primary School Curriculum* (Department of Education and Science, 1999) and *New Language Curriculum* (Department of Education and Science, 2016) but in reality, English grammar remains an area of uncertainty for those who teach it. Grammar is not being taught consistently, which appears to be due to the fact that not all teachers know English grammar. This is because they have not been taught grammar at primary level and as Rachel said by the time they get to college ‘it is presumed to be known by then’.

‘The significance of teacher knowledge about grammar and its application’ is similarly lacking in attention (Andrews, 2010, p. 94) rings true here. It seems from this study that teachers need a support structure to ensure they have the tools of the trade, (Vygotsky, 1978) which is grammar knowledge, to enable them to do their job.

6.2 Future research

Future research could focus on investigating whether the testing of explicit grammar knowledge prior to teacher training students entering college is beneficial to teaching in the Irish context. Having such a test might ensure that teachers have the minimum linguistic subject knowledge, in this case grammar, required for teacher training in the Irish context. Teacher training in Ireland could look at how teachers' explicit grammar knowledge may be tested prior to entering college. In this way it would help ensure that a teacher has the necessary knowledge base for teaching before they can enter teacher training college. A test could be a requirement prior to accessing teacher training college. This could ensure that teachers have the minimum linguistic subject knowledge, in this case grammar, required for teacher training in the Irish context. While the literacy skills test has shown to be of little value in testing applicants' explicit knowledge about grammar, the principle of a test as a prerequisite to teacher training college would serve to highlight the significance of grammar in teaching languages. Furthermore, it would make teachers responsible for ensuring they know the required grammar before entering teacher training. In college, grammar could form part of a second language methodology syllabus.

Teachers who are already working in the primary school system could benefit from accessing in-service/Continuous Professional Development to ensure that they know grammar in order to teach it. This is particularly significant in Ireland given the particularity of the sociocultural context where teachers teach both languages from the beginning of primary education, and this finding implicates two subject areas in primary school (extending beyond that in secondary school).

It seems that the place of English grammar in the language curriculum could be more prominent and a more detailed and expansive syllabus outlined. The findings suggest that teachers need more direction regarding what elements of grammar to teach in each

academic year. It could be more effective to make grammar teaching mandatory with learning outcomes to be achieved outlined at each class level.

While the *New Language Curriculum* (Department of Education and Skills, 2016) in Ireland which is being filtered into schools from September 2016, (oral language in the junior infants to second class) gives recognition to the knowledge of English supporting the teaching of Irish, this study shows that more comprehensive changes are desirable both at primary curriculum level and in teacher training colleges to reflect this. The *New Language Curriculum* (Department of Education and Skills, 2016) has taken a step in emphasising the symbiotic relationship between languages and recognises the common underlying proficiency that exists between languages (Cummins, 1978). That is to say, when children are being taught grammar in English they learn the grammatical concepts that can be transferred to other languages. For example, Irish teachers need curriculum guidelines to align with what grammatical items could be taught in each academic year, similar to the English National Curriculum (2014). In college, it seems from this study that teachers need a better understanding of the theory of L2 learning, of how the knowledge of one grammar supports the learning of another. Teacher training needs to give a more comprehensive preparation to trainee teachers in second language methodology, i.e. teacher training needs to incorporate this into the teacher training syllabus. Current practising teachers need in-service training to give them a theoretical understanding of this. Current practising teachers could therefore benefit from ongoing in-service professionals to give them a theoretical understanding of this.

6.3 Original contribution

This study has brought to the fore the significance of the functional element of grammar learning. Grammar is an important element of linguistic competence which in turn supports communicative competence. The communicative approach to language teaching is that

which is adopted in the curriculum. By supporting teachers' grammar learning, linguistic competence is promoted and communicative competence fostered to communicate within this particular sociocultural context. Developing learners' communicative competence involves engaging learners in different activities which help them to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts.

This study suggests that the mandatory use of Irish to teach Irish needs to be reviewed. Teachers do not have the standard of Irish to teach grammar through Irish. The results of an observational study of 159 classes by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science in Ireland reported that only half of the teachers observed by the inspectors were deemed to have a good standard of teaching and learning in their Irish classes. This assessment was based on the curriculum framework for Irish rather than upon a measure of pupil achievement in Irish. The report maintains that a systematic, structured approach is required for teaching Irish, and teachers require clear guidelines on methodologies so that pupils' language ability can be developed in a systematic and detailed manner (Department of Education and Science, 2007, p. 76). This has not yet happened.

6.4 Summary

Initially, this small study set out to investigate two research questions. These were outlined in the introduction of this research study and they questioned the significance of English grammar in primary school language teaching in the Irish context and the use of English grammar to support second language teaching in the Irish context. These questions were then examined through the perspectives of the primary school teachers, supporting a growing interest in theories that view teachers' learning as a form of participation in social and cultural practices rather than as an internal mental process. This study has looked at grammar teaching and grammar knowledge through the eyes of teachers as viewed in their

unique sociocultural context. The sociocultural approach gives increasing attention to the social, cultural and institutional dimensions of teachers' learning. The perspectives accessed have provided a snapshot of a small group of teachers. A further issue which has come to the fore through this study is the value of grammar as a bridge to academic language. Grammar serves to develop CALPS or the language needed for academic purposes, which is not acquired naturally. It would be beneficial to research further this topic within the Irish context.

6.5 Reflections

The entire study has not only tested my own professional value of grammar but also facilitated the value of grammar in the current educational landscape, i.e. the findings have redefined the value of grammar in the current educational climate. The findings also reveal further research, i.e. that the support of Irish teaching by English language knowledge in the Irish context would be desirable and on a larger scale.

The teachers in this study represented a small sample from mid- and east Ireland. It would be beneficial to do this study on a larger scale: firstly, to get a view across a broader range of schools within this sociocultural context; secondly, increasing the scale of the study would also increase the possibility of accessing further knowledge on the research topic and increase the reliability of the data; and, thirdly, to reduce the problem of generalisation. The results of this study could serve other sociocultural contexts with minority languages fighting for survival, e.g. Scotland, Wales, Catalonia.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Research studies around the topic of grammar

Table A.1 Research studies around the topic of grammar

Research issue	Studies
Should teachers teach grammar at all?	Krashen (1981), Pienemann (1985), Gass (1991), Bialystok (1982)
Are inductive approaches to grammar better than deductive approaches?	Shaffer (1989), DeKeyser (1995)
Should teachers correct students' grammatical errors?	DeKeyser (1993), Chaudron (1977)
Should teachers use grammatical terminology in class?	Garrett (1986), Berman (1979)
Do grammar practise activities facilitate L2 learning?	Ellis (1991)

Appendix 2 Research studies on the benefits of teaching grammar

Table A.2 Research studies on the benefits of teaching grammar

Ellis (2002b)		Instruction contributes to both acquired and learned knowledge
Van Patten et al. (2004)		Any reference to grammar that does not describe form-meaning connections of target language must be inadequate
Ellis (2005)		Learning grammar early is invaluable and provides a basis for real learning that follows
Norris and Ortega (2000)	Meta-analysis of 49 studies	Grammar teaching is effective

Appendix 3 Research studies on the effects of grammar teaching

Table A.3 Research studies on the effects of grammar teaching

Study	Research	Findings
Pica (1983)	The order of acquisition of instructed and naturalistic learners was compared	The same order was noted
Long (1983)	The success of acquisition of instructed and naturalistic learners was compared	Instructed learners generally achieved higher levels of grammatical competence than naturalistic learners, and that instruction was no guarantee that learners would acquire what they had been taught
White et al. (1991)	Do attempts to teach specific grammatical structures result in their acquisition?	All attempts to teach specific grammatical structures do not necessarily result in their acquisition
Long (1988)		Teaching grammar was beneficial but to be effective grammar had to be taught in a way that was compatible with the natural processes of acquisition
Ellis (2002b)		Instruction contributes to both acquired and learned knowledge

Van Patten et al. (2004)		Any reference to grammar that does not describe form-meaning connections of target language must be inadequate
Ellis (2005)		Learning grammar early is invaluable and provides a basis for real learning that follows
Norris and Ortega (2000)	Meta-analysis of 49 studies	Grammar teaching is effective

Appendix 4 Research studies on perspectives on grammar teaching

Table A.4 Research studies on perspectives on grammar teaching

Study	Focus
Andrews (2003)	Cognitions and practices in teaching grammar
Burgess and Etherington (2002)	Teachers' beliefs about grammar and grammar teaching
Chia (2003)	Beliefs about grammar teaching
Schulz (2001)	Student and teacher perceptions of the role of grammar and correction in language learning
Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers (1997)	Teachers' views on conscious grammar instruction
Schulz (1996)	Student and teacher perceptions of the role of grammar and correction in language learning
Berry (1997)	Teachers' awareness of learners' metalinguistic knowledge
Chandler (1988)	Teachers' practices in teaching grammar and their grammatical knowledge

Appendix 5 Linking the questionnaire to literature

Table A.5 Linking the research issue to data and literature through the questionnaire

Research issues	Target data	Statement number	Literature
Primary teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar in language teaching in the Irish context?	Importance, enjoyment, understanding, teaching, English grammar helps in understanding Irish grammar	1. It is important to teach English grammar 2. I enjoy teaching English grammar 6. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their oral work 7. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their written work 8. It is important to teach Irish grammar 9. I enjoy teaching Irish grammar 13. I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their oral work 14. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their written work 15. I think that understanding English grammar helps me to understand Irish grammar more easily 16. I think that understanding English grammar helps me to teach Irish grammar more easily	Teachers' perspectives

Degree to which a knowledge of grammar supports the teaching of languages in the Irish context	Focus on form = practice, knowledge, corrective feedback	<p>1. I teach English grammar per week</p> <p>5. I would teach English grammar more often if I knew more about it</p> <p>6. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their oral work</p> <p>7. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their written work</p> <p>10. I teach Irish grammar per week</p> <p>11. I find Irish grammar difficult to teach</p> <p>13. I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their oral work</p> <p>14. I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their written work</p> <p>15. I think understanding English grammar helps me to understand Irish grammar more easily</p> <p>16. I think understanding English grammar helps me to teach Irish grammar more easily</p>	Vygotsky, FoF, CLT, CF
Teachers' own education as an influence on themselves	Own primary education Grammar in teaching degree and grammar	<p>17. I was taught English grammar when I went to primary school</p> <p>18. I was taught English grammar as part of my teaching degree</p>	Teachers are more influenced by their own experience as

	methodology in teaching degree	<p>19. I was taught how to teach English grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree</p> <p>20. I was taught Irish grammar when I went to primary school</p> <p>21. I was taught Irish grammar as part of my teaching degree</p> <p>22. I was taught how to teach Irish grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree</p>	learners than by what they are taught
Research issues	Target data	Question number	Literature
Primary teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar in language teaching in the Irish context?	Importance, enjoyment, understanding, teaching, English grammar helps in understanding Irish grammar	<p>1. It is important to teach English grammar</p> <p>2. I enjoy teaching English grammar</p> <p>6. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their oral work</p> <p>7. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their written work</p> <p>8. It is important to teach Irish grammar</p> <p>9. I enjoy teaching English grammar</p> <p>13. I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their oral work</p>	Teachers' perspectives

		<p>14. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their written work</p> <p>15. I think that understanding English grammar helps me to understand Irish grammar more easily</p> <p>16. I think that understanding English grammar helps me to teach Irish grammar more easily</p>	
Degree to which a knowledge of grammar supports the teaching of languages in the Irish context	Focus on form = practice, knowledge, corrective feedback	<p>1. I teach English grammar per week</p> <p>5. I would English grammar more often if I knew more about it</p> <p>6. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their oral work</p> <p>7. I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their written work</p> <p>10. I teach Irish grammar per week</p> <p>11. I find Irish grammar difficult to teach</p> <p>13. I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their oral work</p> <p>14. I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their written work</p>	Vygotsky, FoF, CLT, CF

		<p>15. I think understanding English grammar helps me to understand Irish grammar more easily</p> <p>16. I think understanding English grammar helps me to teach Irish grammar more easily</p>	
Teachers' own education as an influence on themselves	<p>Own primary education</p> <p>Grammar in teaching degree and grammar methodology in teaching degree</p>	<p>17. I was taught English grammar when I went to primary school</p> <p>18. I was taught English grammar as part of my teaching degree</p> <p>19. I was taught how to teach English grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree</p> <p>20. I was taught Irish grammar when I went to primary school</p> <p>21. I was taught Irish grammar as part of my teaching degree</p> <p>22. I was taught how to teach Irish grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree</p>	<p>Teachers are more influenced by their own experience as learners than by what they are taught</p>

Appendix 6 Linking the questionnaire to research questions

Table A.6 Linking the questionnaire to research questions

Research issues	Target data	Question number
Primary teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar in language teaching in the Irish context	Importance, enjoyment, understanding, teaching, English grammar helps in understanding Irish grammar	1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21
Degree to which primary teachers use a knowledge of grammar to teach languages in the Irish context	Focus on form, practice, knowledge, corrective feedback	3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22
Teachers' own education as an influence on themselves	Own primary education, grammar in teaching degree and grammar methodology in teaching degree	23–27

Appendix 7 Teacher questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a research project on grammar. It is seeking to establish the importance or not of grammar in the Irish Primary Classroom. The data will be generated from teachers' perspectives and used to establish whether or not grammar is important. The questionnaire is anonymous (as are the interviews and classroom observation). Any information furnished is confidential and will not be given to any other party. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage this is your prerogative. By participating in this research you will be contributing to a body of research, the results of which will be made known to you, via a letter to the principal at the end of the project.

I attach my contact details if you should require further information.

elaynebrowne@eircom.net 086-3728622.

By filling in this questionnaire, it is understood that your consent has been given.

Please indicate if you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview and if so please leave an email address/telephone number at which you may be contacted to arrange the same.

Please indicate if you would be willing to participate in a language lesson observation by the researcher and if so please leave an email address/telephone number at which you may be contacted to arrange the same.

Here are some questions about grammar and teaching. Please say whether you agree or disagree according to the guidelines below. There are no right/wrong answers. Circle a number after each statement according to the degree to which you agree or not with it. For the purpose of this questionnaire, grammar is the set of rules that explain how words are used in a language. It is a set of components: phonetics (the production and perception of sounds), phonology (how sounds are combined), morphology (the study of forms, or how elements are combined to create words), syntax (how words are strung together into sentences), and semantics or meaning.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: English Grammar; Irish Grammar; and your own education.

1 = Yes, I agree a little

2 = Yes, I agree a lot

3 = I don't know

4 = No, I disagree a little

5 = No, I disagree a lot

6 = Not applicable

Please feel free to add any further comments/information you may wish under the space below each question.

English Grammar:

1. It is important to teach English Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. I enjoy teaching English Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. I teach English Grammar per week: 1 2 3 4 5 6
 One lesson x 25 minutes = 1
 Two lessons x 25 minutes = 2
 I don't know = 3
 More than any of the above = 4
 Less than any of the above = 5
 Not applicable = 6
4. English Grammar is difficult to understand. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I would teach English Grammar more often if I knew more about it. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I correct pupils if they use English Grammar incorrectly in their oral work.
 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. I correct pupils if they use English Grammar incorrectly in their written work.
 1 2 3 4 5 6

Irish Grammar:

8. It is important to teach Irish Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I enjoy teaching Irish Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. I teach Irish Grammar per week: 1 2 3 4 5 6
 One lesson x 25 minutes = 1
 Two lessons x 25 minutes = 2
 I don't know = 3
 More than any of the above = 4
 Less than any of the above = 5
 Not applicable = 6
11. I find Irish Grammar difficult to teach. 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. I would teach Irish Grammar more often if I knew more about it. 1 2 3 4 5 6

13. I correct pupils if they use Irish Grammar incorrectly in their oral work.
1 2 3 4 5 6
14. I correct pupils if they use Irish Grammar incorrectly in their written work.
1 2 3 4 5 6
15. I think that understanding English Grammar helps me to understand Irish Grammar more easily. 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. I think that understanding English Grammar helps you to teach Irish Grammar more easily. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Your own education:

17. I was taught English Grammar when I went to primary school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. I was taught English Grammar at college as part of my teaching degree.
1 2 3 4 5 6
19. I was taught how to teach English Grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree. 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. I was taught Irish Grammar during the course of my own primary education.
1 2 3 4 5 6
21. I was taught Irish Grammar at third-level education as part of my teaching degree.
1 2 3 4 5 6
22. I was taught how to teach Irish Grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- I think this was satisfactory in preparing me to teach it.

Statistical Information

Please indicate below:

Male/female _____

Graduate of which teacher training college _____

Age range ____ 20–30 ____ 30–40 ____ 40–50 **X** 50–60

Number of years teaching ____ **23** ____

Many thanks for your contribution to this research

Appendix 8 Profile of respondents

Table A.7 Profile of respondents

Respondent	Age bracket	Where he/she learned English Grammar				Degree of satisfaction with amount (if any) he/she was taught	Frequency	Frequency of Irish Grammar taught	Frequency of English Grammar taught
		PS	SS	UNI	N/A				
Male 6	20–30 = 4	10	0	1	4	YES 9	Twice per week or less	8	6
Female 9	30–40 = 5	PS = Primary school SS = Secondary school UNI = 3rd Level				NO 6	More than twice per week	2	2
							Less than once per fortnight	1	1
							N/A	4	6

Appendix 9 Data coding sample

Comments were coded green if they suggested a function that grammar has; red if it suggested the actual use that someone could make of grammar; orange for value that it has. ‘Value’ was distinguished from ‘use’ by the notion of ‘indispensability’, by which it was meant if a knowledge of grammar was necessary and could not be done without. Any experience in teachers’ learning lives was colour-coded pink and any experience in their teaching life was colour-coded purple. Finally, any feeling that grammar provoked was colour-coded blue. Any comments which did not fall into these thematic codes were coloured yellow. A coding framework created in a Word document was used so that all of the themes and data were visible at all times.

Grammar, meaning; structure are linked to facilitate comprehension Importance of “Proper language” = Grammar for understanding others and expressing ourselves correctly

English grammar is really imp for u/standing, reading writing texts and speaking.

Grammar and meaning are linked. Lack of knowledge on grammar – lacking how to mean and how words function in different contexts

I don’t mind teaching English grammar. Children are overexposed to slang.

yes to enable chn to read fluently and with comprehension and to speak articulately to be easily understood.

In a society addicted to speed and instant gratification, ‘proper’ language has been downgraded as being out-of-date. Letter writing, future CV’s and professional emails still rely on correct grammar as a measure of one’s education & intelligence in my opinion. M5

It gives children an understanding of the structure and order within the language and they develop a greater appreciation of the language being studied.

Yes, we use grammar in the language that we use to communicate to others. Grammar

helps us to express ourselves correctly.

It is an **essential component of communication** a means of getting across our message and in turn for people to understand what we mean

Lessons are structured with a definite beginning, middle and end. Children usually realise they are familiar with the grammar being taught but often don't know its correct name or appropriate use. M5

It makes perfect sense to teach grammar as a basic understanding and knowledge of how a language is structured and how the use of words works and rules that apply. Later when learning a new language it is easier to comprehend in how languages and their grammar differ slightly from one another.

I do a lot of supplementary grammar work as textbooks don't cover enough or not at all.

It is usu. An integral part of a writing lesson.

.English grammar is difficult to understand. Focus on forms does not benefit children.

Children need to use grammar and identify grammatical instruction that relates meaning and form.

Generally I find its *raison d'être* and applications to be sensible and comprehensible.

Maybe it's that I felt that I was not taught all the rules of English grammar in my schooling days so part of my education in this area was self- taught.

I teach more grammar because I know more about it. Children are engaging in a more functional approach used in Australia – greater success rates, increased comprehension.

At Primary level each class level has its own aspects of grammar to address and I do sufficient for the class I have.

Appendix 10 Letter of invitation to partake in research

27 Harvest Way

Drogheda.

Co. Louth.

Dear Principal and teacher,

I am a primary school principal currently studying the Doctorate in Education programme.

As part of this programme I have chosen a topic in which I am very interested and which is quite topical: grammar and its role in the Irish Primary school classroom. This project is for Research purposes only.

Through the enclosed questionnaire I am seeking perspectives on the importance of grammar or not in the Irish Primary school classroom. I am looking for classroom teachers (4th–6th classes) to participate in the enclosed questionnaire. This questionnaire is anonymous. It consists of 22 questions which allow also for opinions should a teacher wish to develop a point.

By participating in this research you will be contributing to a body of research, the results of which will be made known to your school at the end of this project. Any information furnished is confidential and will not be given to any other party. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage this is your prerogative.

I am also looking for teachers to follow up with interviews. This may be by telephone, with the assurance of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any stage also. If you are willing to participate in interviews or a lesson observation, please write this on the form.

Many thanks

Best wishes

Elaine Browne

Appendix 11 Sample interview questions

Own education

1. Do you have fond memories of learning English at school?
1. What approaches and methods were used?
1. Was there formal analysis of language?
2. Was there any particular teacher, that you recall, who made the experience more enjoyable? How so? Why?
3. Was there any particular time/year that you did not enjoy learning English? How? Why so?
4. Do you have fond memories of learning Irish at school?
5. What approaches and methods were used?
6. Was there formal analysis of language?
7. Was there any particular teacher, that you recall, who made the experience more enjoyable? How so? Why?
8. Was there any particular time/year that you did not enjoy learning English? How? Why so?
9. Can you recall a positive memory of learning English grammar? Irish grammar?
10. Do you think that an awareness of English grammar helps you to understand Irish grammar?
11. Have you studied foreign languages?
12. Have you enjoyed them?
13. What kind of methods were used to teach them?
14. What about at third level: were you taught English grammar there? Irish grammar?
15. Can you recall any particular teacher who you felt made the lessons more fun?
16. Do you think that your own education as a pupil has had any influence on the way you teach today?

17. Why did you become a teacher?
18. Are your earliest teaching experiences positive or negative?
19. When you were being trained as a teacher, were you taught how to teach grammar in any particular way?
20. What aspects of the course did you find most enjoyable? Least enjoyable?
21. Do you think that a teacher who does not have grammatical competence would be in a position to teach grammar?

Appendix 12 Questionnaire responses

The data generated through the questionnaire revealed the following held opinions summarised in Table A.8 below.

Table A.8 Summary of questionnaire findings

Question	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Don't know	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot	Don't know
It is important to teach English grammar	11	4				
I enjoy teaching English grammar	5	9			1	
I teach English grammar per week	6	5	1	2	1	
I find English grammar difficult to understand?	2	2		4	7	
I would teach English grammar more often if I knew more about it	2	2	2	1		8
I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their oral work	4	7	1	1	2	
I correct pupils if they use English grammar incorrectly in their written work	5	9		1		
It is important to teach Irish grammar	4	8		2	1	
I would teach Irish grammar more often if I knew more about it	2	5	3	1	1	2
I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their oral work	6	4		2	2	
I correct pupils if they use Irish grammar incorrectly in their written work	5	7		1		2

I think that understanding English grammar helps me to understand Irish grammar more easily	3	3		1	6	
I think that understanding English grammar helps me to teach Irish grammar more easily		7	2	1	5	
I was taught English grammar in PS	8	3	3	1		
I was taught English grammar at college as part of my teaching degree		1			14	
I was taught how to teach English grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree	3		1		6	3
I was taught Irish grammar during the course of my own primary education	7	2		1	2	
I was taught Irish grammar at third level education as part of my teaching degree	9	2			2	2
I was taught how to teach Irish Grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree	2	2		3	4	4

Appendix 13 Transcripts of interviews

Paula

Paula, may I ask you how long you have been teaching?

28 years.

And in that time you would have taught languages?

Yes.

Do you think grammar should be taught to primary pupils?

Yes I think from first class upwards their attention can be drawn to things that are around the wall to it. Yes when they have a good foundation you can – I wouldn't start in Irish you know their second language until fourth class and I will say to them What describes a noun? An adjective and what describes a verb an adverb ... teachers should be constantly drawing pupils' attention to the grammar and then by fourth class they can be ready to learn Irish grammar because they will have a good foundation in their native language ... You can say what's this 'Teach' so that if you are supposed to be using Gaeilge only to teach Gaeilge well then how are you supposed to connect it to the English or first language – you need to have a discussion about it in English and you are not going to do it in fourth, fifth or sixth ... you aren't going to stop a discussion in English to ask what a word is in Irish so where do you do it ????? I think you should always use the first language when teaching the second and draw attention to the similarities and differences between them all.

When you are teaching the second language you should always use the second language?

No you should use the first language to draw attention to the similarities or differences between the two ... how are you supposed to teach, for example seo é bosca beag ... if you are obliged to use Irish language only to teach it.

You can't do it in English class because you will stop the flow of English then ... and oh yeah by the way a big box ... big is an adjective ... what did we do this morning? So obviously you are going to let teachers use English to teach Irish as the grammar comes up in the Irish lesson because that is the right time to do it ... Same in French, Spanish.

So you think that the first language, for example grammar in the first language helps grammar learning in the second language?

Yes ... At present the children are not making the links between the present tense and the aimsir laithreach (Irish language for present tense) and they should be able to make that link from the grammar of their first language but it is never drawn attention to from their first language and it should be.

Do you think that you are more influenced by your experience as a learner or any directives that have been set by the government in the curriculum?

If I had never done a foreign language in second school I might never have developed such a liking for languages and that is an inherent trait because my father was very good at languages and one of my sons is very good at languages – now how did that come about?

It is also a trait that I got from my father – my grandmother's side – my father learned Spanish in Casteltownbere because the Spanish fishermen used to come there.

So Paula, if you got a directive from the government tomorrow saying don't teach grammar – how would you respond to it?

Just keep teaching it ... just as they said that children are not supposed to be reading and writing Irish up to first class. WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO? There are some children who are in jnr/snr infants who are well able to learn Irish ... so restricting

children who are able to write so that they can't write and that's what is directed in the curriculum ... and that's what is not followed (despite directives) in our Irish plan ... that if the children are ready to write in first class that this is they should write.

So you are in fact more influenced by your own experience as a teacher and what you have seen working than by policies and directives.

Yeah because what do they know? Are you going to stop a child who is well able to learn Irish and who is writing Irish out of their own initiative and the government turns around and says 'no' and that's the reason why I know that because L. Gleeson (a former teacher) had 1st and 2nd class reading and writing Irish and the inspector turned around and says 'no' they are not to do that so that's why I made sure that it would be in our first class plan and the plan says that if a child is ready to do it let him do it ... I don't know where they get their ideas from here we are catering for the higher ability and they won't allow us to cater for the higher ability in Irish ... that's like saying it doesn't matter if you are good at maths – you have to stay in the same place as the others ... you are not in third class – you are only in first class so you can't do it ... so is that how the Chinese got to where they are – by restricting kids ???... oh no.

Paula, can I ask you when you were doing your teacher training (Hibernia course) – did they check to see that you could teach grammar and that you knew it?

No, not at all and I'd say luckily I learned my grammar through my French in UCD.

Was there any sort of grammar check?

No, it was presumed that you knew your grammar and that is a very poor presumption to make ... Unless you are EAL or unless you are a really good language learner and have it sorted out in your own head you aren't going to learn grammar or to be able to teach grammar just like that ... for example, what they do get when they are studying one little

unit on adjectives and then they don't get it any more – it is not enough ... they don't know enough they don't get enough practise ... I am asking them what is an adjective and they are saying to me ... wah ???? that's why I have them up on the wall so that I can draw their attention to them all the time ... ok, so maybe they do adjectives in first class and then they do them in second classes but hey they are only doing them for a week in one unit maybe two units ... once in beginning of book and then at end and it is only one little exercise and I mean they should have other things to be doing ... and with all the other stuff they are doing it is not actually going to stay in their brains, if the teachers weren't so overloaded you could do it in history ... you could draw their attention ... for example, the Vikings were very ???? vicious ... vicious Vikings ... you could do it in history but the ordinary run of the mill teacher is too busy trying to get the history done ... to say anything because you are supposed to interconnect ... that's ok because if you are anything like me you can work it out. It is so much easier for them to remember what an adverb is because an adverb goes with a verb. An adjective should be called an adnoun ... I don't know where they got the word 'adjective' from?

Now prepositions.

Na réamhfhocail chomhsuite?

They never really learn this in Irish but you obviously know what it is because you learned it in Irish ... All I remember is Tuiseal ginideach (genitive case) because the teacher used to always say to us 'Cad é seo?' (what is this?) and it wasn't until nearly I was in fifth year and no one had drawn our attention to the tuiseal ginideach until then and then I realised 'ah here that means the possessive' ... and it was when I learned it in French that it clicked.

Ah, really? How did that communicate in French?

La plume de Marie 'of the' ... the feather of Marie ... like the tuiséal ginideach in Irish and then I realised it was instead of the apostrophe 's' in English.

Was any of this covered then in Hibernia course (teacher training college)?

No there was probably a presumption that you knew your grammar.

Ok.

Do you think it is appropriate to be teaching grammar to children?

Well actually children are very good language learners because they take the rules that they already know and apply them to new languages ... Can you give me an example of what I mean?

Well Eoin says I goed for I went or j'ai lit (because of j'ai dit) ... instead of j'ai lu ... Is that what you mean?

Yes they have the what you call it ... oh yeah universal grammar ... they are using the rules they already know and applying them to new verbs or whatever ... of course he is only young.

So Paula ... on the question of age ... when do you think it is appropriate to be teaching grammar?

They say after 12 they learn it faster ... is it they learn it faster or is it ... much less is expected from an 8-year-old ??? ... when you think of teaching a language first class to leaving cert = 12 years ... or if you start at 11 they learn the same amount in six years ... I think less is expected of younger children ... too much less they are well capable of learning more ... The worse thing we ever did here in Ireland was to dumb everything down ... when I was at university ... I was writing essays ... nowadays you write the

critique of a book in English ... They have even changed the format of the leaving cert. ... you read the questions in French and answer the text in English.

That's at pass/lower level?

I don't know what level it is ... Ronan did pass level and Ciaran did higher level and they were pretty much the same ... one little text and ABC questions ... what is the point in 'dumbing down'? ... The French don't dumb down ... they fire grammar at their children and not only that they bring them to a restaurant and they are expected to behave ... a lot is expected of them.

So you think it depends on what we think they are capable of?

Yeah ... I blame American psychologists who have caused everything to be dumbed down ... I see the non-nationals who arrive here ... they have beautiful writing because children are expected to write beautifully ... when children are expected to write properly they do it ... Ross was 6 when he went to school in Greece and he knew his calligraphy and phonics by Christmas because it was expected of him ... It is to do with expectation ... So what happens if people don't know their grammar in their first language?

Well that's the interesting thing, isn't it? You can look at America that people that go there in 40s and they can speak perfect grammar six years later; they obviously had a good understanding in their first language and sorted it out in their brain and learned the grammar of their first language well and then you will also get the ones who have been in America for 20 years and still speak pigeon English ... so they are not really good language learners ... the point is – you have to be good at languages. Subconsciously – a 70-year-old woman that came from Italy and still speaks very broken English and you can have a woman that is indistinguishable from an American. Neither of them might have done any language learning but one of them might be a good grammar learner. One of them has sorted it out in her own brain and of course motivation has a lot to do with it as

well – you know the intrinsic motivation. One has obviously got intrinsic motivation and she has learned language perfectly – again she doesn't know she has intrinsic motivation – she just LEARNS THE LANGUAGE ALMOST PERFECTLY – THE OTHER ONE CAN'T BE BOTHERED AND 40 YEARS LATER is still speaking with the Italian accent. If you don't have intrinsic motivation – you'll learn as much as you have to to get by and you will fossilise within yourself and you won't go any further. Second language acquisition talks about this all the time because it is the intrinsic motivation (Krashen?) the emotional part of it is where some people decide that they are going to learn a language up to a certain point/period and that is it ... because they want to keep their own identity.

The Italian man who has learned English to the standard that he should have is because he has said to himself at some stage that he wants to keep some of his Italianness.

So is it that you are saying that when you are learning a language that you are absorbing the culture?

Yes, and they want to keep a bit of their own culture to themselves – that's the emotional bond to the language and the whole country.

Don't forget I like languages and I like grammar – When I was doing the exams very few people chose grammar ... I had the choice between studying 'gafa' or the grammar and I chose the grammar – I was one of the few people who took the grammar paper.

Even if I hadn't heard it before I would be able to choose what was correct ... My ear was tuned to the grammar ... Very few people would believe that I chose the grammar paper.

Yes, I see. So Paula – I am just wondering your views on an explicit knowledge of grammar in the first language to learn grammar in the second ... so let me word that more clearly – if a child doesn't have an explicit knowledge of grammar in his/her first language – can they learn the grammar of a second language easily?

Yes, whether they are doing it implicitly they are actually using the rules that they already know of their first language and they are applying this knowledge to their second language – they are doing that implicitly and they don't even know it – when you get intelligent learners in secondary school they can make links between their first and second language but most people will do it implicitly; they don't even know that they are doing it – but they don't need to learn it but it is a very good discipline to have ... At present the children are not making the links between the present tense and the aimsir laithreach and they should be able to make that link from the grammar of their first language but it is never drawn attention to from their first language and it should be.

Well the new curriculum that is coming in someone says that we should be able to draw attention to their language in Irish.

Well no, because we are supposed to be speaking Irish to them all the time – how can we draw attention to the fact that this is what we learned in Irish last week and this is it in English if we can't use the language in English in their Irish class because you aren't going to do it in English. It is because their explicit knowledge of their language is where it is going to come into it big time – when they go to learn their second, third and additional languages that is where it is of use to them – they won't know that from the universal grammar.

Paula, let me give you an example ... take two scenarios. 1. Where the teacher has a fifth class and they all know their English grammar and then another where they don't know any English grammar ... Do you think the ones who have a knowledge of English grammar can learn the Irish grammar more easily?

Yes, even though they have the knowledge of English grammar they should be able to learn the Irish grammar more easily – because you see in Irish schools most teachers don't have

EAL learning and a knowledge of English grammar so TEACHERS DO NOT KNOW THEIR GRAMMAR.

So Paula, just to be clear, you are telling me that in your experience of managing teachers etc. you are saying to me that teachers do not know their grammar?

By osmosis they don't know their grammar unless they have EAL. Teachers like you and I know our grammar but the others don't make the links. When I was doing Hibernia (teacher training) someone said we should be doing na logainmeacha (the placenames) but to explicitly do that the children are not going to make the links, someone has to draw their attention to the links. Otherwise, you have 2 or 3 clever ones and they make the links but the teacher should be able to help them to make the links

Rachel

Grammar gives children an understanding of the structure and order within the language and they develop a greater appreciation of the language being studied. Lessons are structured with a definite beginning, middle and end.

Rachel can I ask you if you were referring to grammar lesson when you made that comment in your questionnaire?

No, when children know their grammar they structure their lessons well.

Can you give me an example?

Paragraphs ... in sixth class showing the pupils that paragraphs are ways of ordering your ideas.

Ok, any other examples?

Well if you know what a verb is in English – then you can recognise it in Irish and then you notice it is at the beginning of the sentence and then it is easy to structure your Irish

because you know the rule is that the verb comes at the beginning of the sentence, so you do it automatically and you don't have to feel your way in the dark trying to understand what that word is at the beginning of the sentence because you understand it in its essence and then you don't have to teach it in Irish because it is automatically transferred.

So when you say you understand it in its essence – what do you mean?

You don't need to know the label verb but you need to understand what a verb is – you understand what it mean ... it's like if you know what a verb is – its an action word and then you recognise which word is actually a verb in Irish – its position in the sentence is easier to understand so then you realise that all verbs come at the beginning.

Would that be typical of a lot of grammar?

Well no, but you see it's a bit like riding a bike and the getting on a motor bike – there is some overlap in parts and the ones that are different you know what they are for – they are just called a different name ... so it's like you don't have to learn it all again.

Yes, that is well put ... Is it like knowing how to drive a car gives you an understanding of driving other vehicles?

Yeah.

So Rachel, grammar is for structure – is there any other use?

It's for communication to get our message across in all language – that's what language is for ... language evolved for communication.

But do we really need to know grammar to communicate?

Eh, yes ... I know when I was writing essays in Irish in schools I would think of what I wanted to say in English and use my understanding of the correspondence or not in Irish to try to communicate my essay on 'Bochtanas' (Poverty), for example ... it's from using the

grammar incorrectly in Irish when you translate, for example Tá sé mo ... typical what kids say for ... it is mine ... but if they learn the copail 'is' and learn how it's different to English grammar that helps them learn too.

But then what happens if they don't know the English grammar?

Well I suppose it slows up the learning because it is like a new animal for which there is no name in English but if it's been explained to you in English and you have an understanding of what it is, well then – it doesn't matter if you know the name or not ... it's its essence that is important.

So if I understand you correctly ... children need to know their grammar?

Yes, I think it helps to understand what something is generally or even better specifically.

Can I ask you if you learned grammar at school?

I didn't learn real grammar in English ... I learned what a noun, verb, adjective and adverb was – the rest, no.

Was it easy to learn Irish grammar then?

Well Irish in general was quite badly taught in primary school – the teachers drilled Irish into you and nothing was really about understanding – it was about just knowing. What's more they didn't even use any English so you really didn't know what you were learning ... I understood the verbs and the adjectives but learning the declensions in Irish was torture ... I used to have a sick stomach going to school because Mrs Shiels was so cross if you didn't know your declensions off by heart ... she'd really embarrass you ... and I was in fifth year at that stage. My brother – who did Latin in school – understood what the declensions were because he had been taught what he was doing.

So he understood grammar from having learned it through another language?

Well, I think English was used to explain and more than likely the concept has to be explained in English for the Latin to make sense?

Yes, I see what you mean.

Were you taught grammar at college?

Ah, no ... but I remember the look of shock on the French lecturer's face when one of the teachers in her seminar did not know what an adjective was.

How did it come about that the French lecturer discovered that?

It was during a French seminar – she was teaching adverbs and the teacher put her hand up and asked what an adjective was.

So there was no grammar check at all?

Not a bit. I majored in Irish in my degree – it was the subject I took and there was never a word of English used ... this is an effort to get you fluent.

I suppose at college we can understand the importance of exposing the teachers to the language they may not hear otherwise.

Do you feel confident teaching grammar?

Well, I teach what I have to and if I don't understand it I check it beforehand. I know enough to get by at primary school and I suppose ideally people should be given what they need at college to do their job ... but I presume they think that it should be all known by then ... so maybe it is back to the primary school curriculum to make sure that grammar is being taught properly.

Is it not, though, as important to make sure that teachers know grammar to teach in both languages?

Yes, that's true – I'll teach only what I am obliged to if I don't know something really well. Teachers who love maths maybe spend more time teaching maths and teachers who know English spend lots of time teaching it because they really enjoy it.

Marcus

Grammar is important for communication. It helps us to express ourselves correctly. It is an essential component of communication; a means of getting across our message and in turn for people to understand what we mean.

Do we need to know grammar in English to communicate? Is it not automatic?

Well, correct grammar assists in expression, articulation and to show a measure of education. So it is necessary to know correct grammar to make oneself understood in a more correct way. This won't necessarily come automatically.

So you associate grammar very much with correctness?

Good grammar equals good quality work and fluency in any language is impossible without mastery of the grammar.

Well yes, because children are overexposed to slang. In a society addicted to speed and instant gratification 'proper' language has been downgraded as being out-of-date. Look at how texting has downgraded language. Letter writing, future CVs and professional emails were held to rely on correct grammar as a measure of a person's education and intelligence.

Do you think understanding grammar in English helps you to understand it more in Irish?

Absolutely, even if it's not the same the contrast helps you to learn it and it is by referring it back to what you know that you learn.

Were you taught grammar during your primary school years?

I was taught in some classes and not others ... a lot of what I know was self-taught.

Do you think you should have been taught grammar?

Yes, as you can see in my lesson I teach grammar as it arises – it comes into lots of lessons – not just a specific 'English grammar' lesson.

Yes, there was a lot of grammar and the children have a good grasp of aspects of grammar and they enjoy learning it.

Appendix 14 Grammar literacy professional skills test

Grammar

The grammar section of the test will determine whether you know and understand the following:

a) Consistency with standard written English

- Failure to observe sentence boundaries
- Abandoned or faulty constructions and sentence fragments
- Lack of cohesion
- Lack of agreement between subject and verb
- Should have/of, might have/of; (would/could/must/need not have/of)
- Inappropriate or incomplete verb forms
- Wrong or missing preposition, e.g. different from/than/to
- Noun/pronoun agreement error
- Determiner/noun agreement error
- Inappropriate or missing determiner
- Problems with comparatives and superlatives
- Problems with relative pronouns in subordinate clauses
- Inappropriate or missing adverbial forms

b) Sense, clarity and freedom from ambiguity

- Wrong tense/tense inconsistency
- Unrelated participles
- Attachment ambiguities
- Vague or ambiguous pronoun reference
- Confusion of words, e.g. imply/infer

c) Professional suitability and style

- Non-parallelism in lists
- Inconsistent register and tone, e.g. you/one; active/passive; level of formality; colloquialisms; appropriateness for audience
- Shift in person within sentence, or across sentences
- Redundancy/tautology
- Inappropriate conjunctions (also known as connectives), e.g. 'The reason is because ...'

Appendix 15 Extract from grammar section of the literacy professional skills test

Grammar – Task A Complete the following passage. Select the best of the given alternatives at the points at which there are blank lines. Tick the most appropriate choice to complete the passage. If you wish to change your answer, cross out your original tick, and tick your new choice. You will need to check that you have made the best overall set of choices for completing the passage. This is an extract from a letter to a newly appointed teacher from the Chair of Governors. Dear Ms Edge On behalf of the governors of Green’s High School, I would like to congratulate you on _____ being appointed to the staff.

having been appointed to the staff.

you’re having been appointed to the staff.

you being appointed to the staff.

I hope you will enjoy working at the school; your appointment will

be affective from 1 September. become affected on 1 September.

take effect from 1 September. take affect from 1 September. 2 marks Page 6 of 33

Grammar – Task A continued

Other members of the Governing Body and I

- _____ will hope to attend
- hope to attend
- will be hoping to attend
- hoping to attend the staff induction day at the beginning of the term and _____
- am looking forward to meeting you then.

- will be looking forward to meeting you then.
- are looking forward to meeting you then.
- is looking forward to meeting you then.

I hope your period of service at the school will be professionally rewarding, a broadening of your experience and _____

the development of your skills as a teacher.

developing your skills as a teacher. an opportunity

to develop your skills as a teacher.

the opportunity to develop your skills as a teacher.

Yours sincerely M Stewart, MBE (Chair of Governors) 3 marks Page 7 of 33

Grammar – Task B Complete the following passage. Select the best of the given alternatives at the points at which there are blank lines. Tick the most appropriate choice to complete the passage. If you wish to change your answer, cross out your original tick, and tick your new choice. You will need to check that you have made the best overall set of choices for completing the passage. This extract is taken from a discussion paper on the use of

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) within the curriculum. For some time, it has been part of our school policy to include ICT throughout the curriculum, providing that it makes a direct and useful contribution to the subject(s) and to each pupil's learning. In order to implement the policy we need to review how ICT is currently used and, in particular, ask:

- How can software be assessed, and by whom?
- Is there any hardware that is currently under-used?
- Is there any software that is currently under-used?
-

_____ Where in the curriculum do students currently gain ICT experience? Where in the curriculum was students currently gaining ICT experience? Where in the curriculum has students currently gained

ICT experience? Where in the curriculum will ICT experience currently be gained by students? 1 mark Page 8 of 33

Grammar – Task B continued The school also needs to ask, ‘How is ICT placed within the school development plan and cycle of review?’ For ICT resources to be used effectively to support your subject, you need to be clear about how and why you wish to use them. A review will provide

_____ an opportunity for clarifying your needs and goals and consider existing practice. an opportunity to clarify your needs and goals and consider existing practice. an opportunity to clarify your needs and goals and considering existing practice. an opportunity for clarification of your needs and goals and consider existing practice. The successful integration of ICT will

_____ enhance pupils’ interest and skills and may lead to new initiatives with other departments. enhance pupils’ interest and skills and are leading to new initiatives with other departments. enhance pupils’ interest and skills and leading to new initiatives with other departments. enhancing pupils’ interest and skills and lead to new initiatives with other departments. 2 marks Page 9 of 33

Grammar – Task C Complete the following passage. Select the best of the given alternatives at the points at which there are blank lines. Tick the most appropriate choice to complete the passage. If you wish to change your answer, cross out your original tick, and tick your new choice. You will need to check that you have made the best overall set of choices for completing the passage. This is an extract from a staff circular about Young Enterprise. For the third consecutive year, the school is preparing to take part in Young Enterprise. This scheme is a national education charity founded to inspire young people to learn through business enterprise and link schools and industry. It was started in 1963.

_____ Some of you could

have heard of Young Enterprise, or may of taken part in the scheme. Some of you may of
 heard of Young Enterprise, or could of taken part in the scheme. Some of you may have
 heard of Young Enterprise, or may have taken part in the scheme. Some of you may have
 heard of Young Enterprise, or may of have taken part in the scheme. Volunteers from the
 world of business play a key part in helping Young Enterprise run a number of programmes
 for young people. These include running a real company in 'Company Programme' or 'Team
 Enterprise'. Last year, _____ 70,000 pupils
 have participated in Young Enterprise across the UK. 70,000 pupils were participated in
 Young Enterprise across the UK. 70,000 pupils was participated in Young Enterprise across
 the UK. 70,000 pupils participated in Young Enterprise across the UK. 2 marks Page 10 of 33

Grammar – Task C continued Young Enterprise is highly recommended because
 _____ these kinds of scheme present
 so many unique learning opportunities. these kind of scheme present so many unique
 learning opportunities. these kinds of schemes present so many unique learning
 opportunities. these kinds of schemes presents so many unique learning opportunities. 1 mark
 Page 11 of 33

Appendix 16 Extract from National Curriculum of England (2014)

Sample Years 1; 4; 5; 6

English – Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation 2

Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation –

Year 1: Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)

Word	<p>Regular plural noun suffixes –s or –es [for example, <i>dog, dogs; wish, wishes</i>], including the effects of these suffixes on the meaning of the noun</p> <p>Suffixes that can be added to verbs where no change is needed in the spelling of root words (e.g. <i>helping, helped, helper</i>)</p> <p>How the prefix un– changes the meaning of verbs and adjectives [negation, for example, <i>unkind</i>, or <i>undoing: untie the boat</i>]</p>
Sentence	<p>How words can combine to make sentences</p> <p>Joining words and joining clauses using <i>and</i></p>
Text	<p>Sequencing sentences to form short narratives</p>
Punctuation	<p>Separation of words with spaces</p> <p>Introduction to capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks to demarcate sentences</p> <p>Capital letters for names and for the personal pronoun I</p>

Terminology for letter, capital letter

pupils

word, singular, plural

sentence

punctuation, full stop, question mark, exclamation mark

Year 4: Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)

Word

The grammatical difference between **plural** and **possessive** –s

Standard English forms for **verb inflections**

instead of local spoken forms [for example, *we were* instead of *we was*, or *I did* instead of *I done*]

Sentence

Noun phrases expanded by the addition of modifying adjectives, nouns and preposition phrases (e.g. *the teacher* expanded to: *the strict maths teacher with curly hair*)

Fronted adverbials [for example, *Later that day, I heard the bad news.*]

Text

Use of paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme

Appropriate choice of **pronoun** or **noun** within and across **sentences** to aid **cohesion** and avoid repetition

Punctuation	<p>Use of inverted commas and other punctuation to indicate direct speech [for example, a comma after the reporting clause; end punctuation within inverted commas: <i>The conductor shouted, “Sit down!”</i>]</p> <p>Apostrophes to mark plural possession [for example, <i>the girl’s name, the girls’ names</i>]</p> <p>Use of commas after fronted adverbials</p>
Terminology for pupils	<p>determiner</p> <p>pronoun, possessive pronoun</p> <p>adverbial</p>
Year 5: Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)	
Word	<p>Converting nouns or adjectives into verbs using suffixes [for example, <i>–ate; –ise; –ify</i>]</p> <p>Verb prefixes [for example, <i>dis–, de–, mis–, over– and re–</i>]</p>
Sentence	<p>Relative clauses beginning with <i>who, which, where, when, whose, that</i>, or an omitted relative pronoun</p> <p>Indicating degrees of possibility using adverbs [for example, <i>perhaps, surely</i>] or modal verbs [for example, <i>might, should, will, must</i>]</p>

Text	<p>Devices to build cohesion within a paragraph</p> <p>[for example, <i>then, after that, this, firstly</i>]</p> <p>Linking ideas across paragraphs using adverbials of time [for example, <i>later</i>], place [for example, <i>nearby</i>] and number [for example, <i>secondly</i>] or tense choices [for example, he <i>had</i> seen her before]</p>
Punctuation	<p>Brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis</p> <p>Use of commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity</p>
Terminology for pupils	<p>modal verb, relative pronoun</p> <p>relative clause</p> <p>parenthesis, bracket, dash</p> <p>cohesion, ambiguity</p>
Year 6: Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)	
Word	<p>The difference between vocabulary typical of informal speech and vocabulary appropriate for formal speech and writing [for example, <i>find out – discover; ask for – request; go in – enter</i>]</p> <p>How words are related by meaning as synonyms and antonyms [for example, <i>big, large, little</i>]</p>

Sentence	<p>Use of the passive to affect the presentation of information in a sentence [for example, <i>I broke the window in the greenhouse</i> versus <i>The window in the greenhouse was broken (by me)</i>].</p> <p>The difference between structures typical of informal speech and structures appropriate for formal speech and writing [for example, the use of question tags: <i>He's your friend, isn't he?</i>, or the use of subjunctive forms such as <i>If I were</i> or <i>Were they to come</i> in some very formal writing and speech]</p>
Year 6: Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)	
Text	<p>Linking ideas across paragraphs using a wider range of cohesive devices: repetition of a word or phrase, grammatical connections [for example, the use of adverbials such as <i>on the other hand</i>, <i>in contrast</i>, or <i>as a consequence</i>], and ellipsis</p> <p>Layout devices [for example, headings, sub-headings, columns, bullets, or tables, to structure text]</p>
Punctuation	<p>Use of the semi-colon, colon and dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses [for example, <i>It's raining; I'm fed up</i>]</p>

Use of the colon to introduce a list and use of semi-colons within lists

Punctuation of bullet points to list information

How hyphens can be used to avoid ambiguity [for example, *man eating shark* versus *man-eating shark*, or *recover* versus *re-cover*]

Terminology for subject, object

pupils active, passive

synonym, antonym

ellipsis, hyphen, colon, semi-colon, bullet points

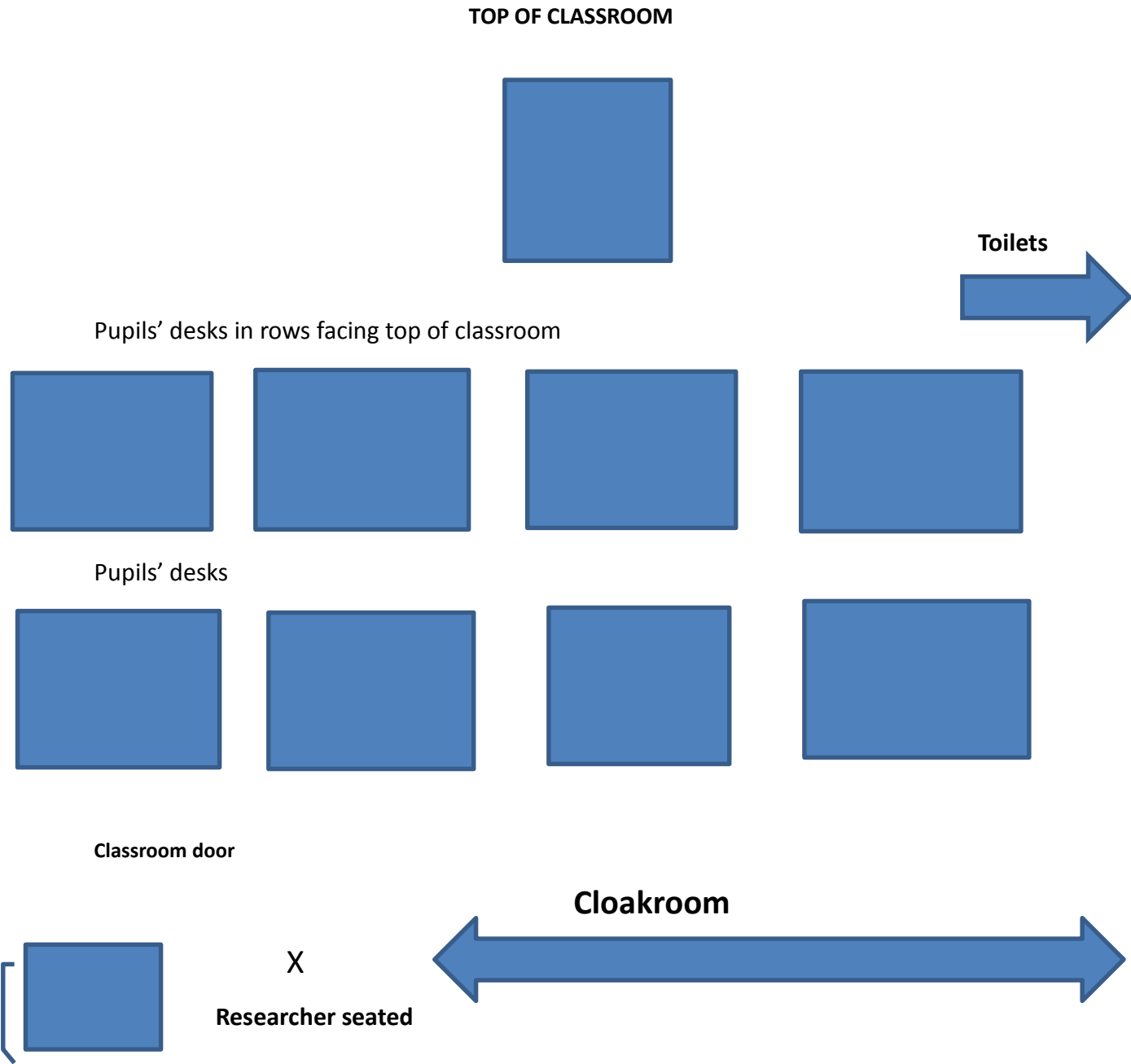
Appendix 17 Extract from reflective journal

Today from what I saw in class with Marcus, I have begun to question whether it is a knowledge of grammar in any language that may support another. His walls have so much Irish grammar I have begun to wonder which language is supporting which language ... Could it be that a person can learn a second language grammar and use it to understand a first language grammar[.] I think that this can sometimes happen through immersion education[,], particularly where children are immersed from an early age[,], so perhaps if there is a lot of Irish being used [then] children may understand the concept through having learned it in Irish but then relate it back to what he/she knows of English. But in immersion education the language of schooling is what the children think through[.] I may explore this with Paula next.

Appendix 18 Plans of classrooms

Classroom 1

Observation 1 and 2

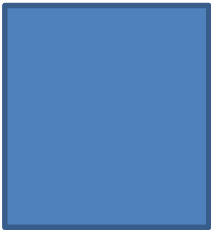
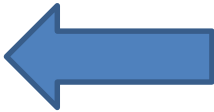


Classroom 2

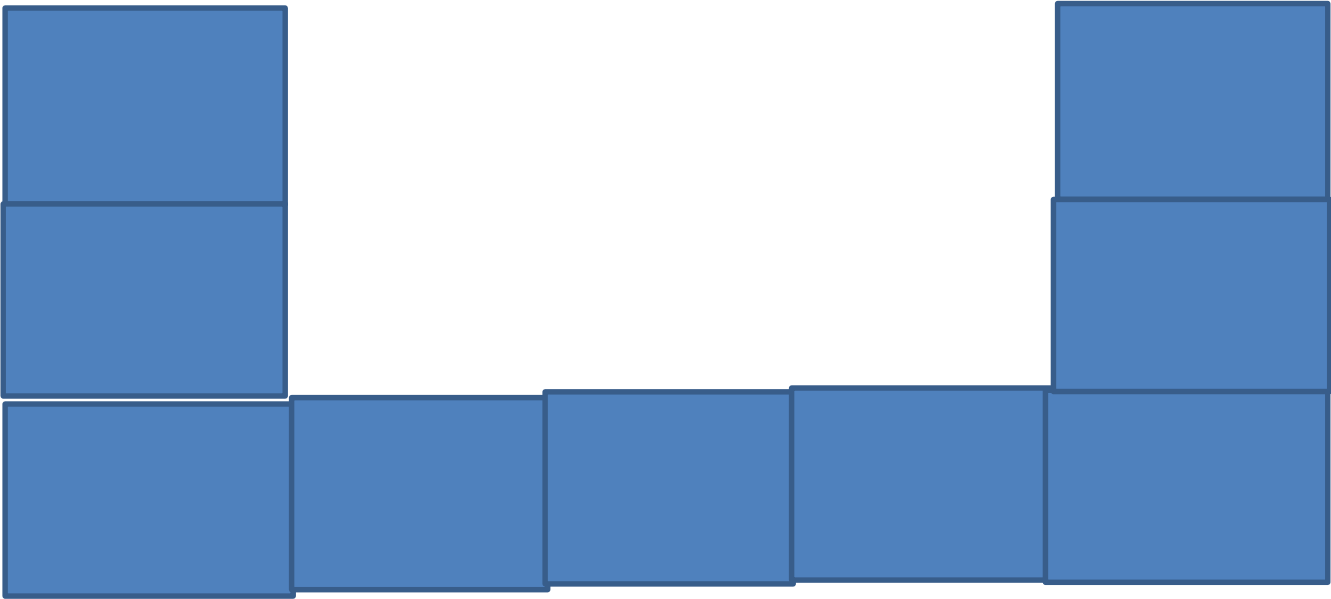
Observation 3

TOP OF CLASSROOM

Toilets



Pupils' desks in u-shape facing top of classroom



Classroom door



X

Researcher seated

Cloakroom



Appendix 19 Observation schedule

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

School	Date	Time	Class	Direct (X) and indirect (O) references to grammar
Lesson Subject	Content			
Teacher-led activities Introduction: Middle: Close:				
Additional Grammar arising				
Pupil-response activities Introduction: Middle: Close:				
MISCELLANEOUS				

Appendix 20 Researcher's questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a research project on grammar. It is seeking to establish the importance or not of grammar in the Irish Primary Classroom. The data will be generated from teachers' perspectives and used to establish whether or not grammar is important. The questionnaire is anonymous (as are the interviews and classroom observation). Any information furnished is confidential and will not be given to any other party. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage this is your prerogative. By participating in this research you will be contributing to a body of research, the results of which will be made known to you, via a letter to the principal at the end of the project.

I attach my contact details if you should require further information.

elaynebrowne@eircom.net 086-3728622.

By filling in this questionnaire, it is understood that your consent has been given.

Please indicate if you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview and if so please leave an email address/telephone number at which you may be contacted to arrange the same.

Please indicate if you would be willing to participate in a language lesson observation by the researcher and if so please leave an email address/telephone number at which you may be contacted to arrange the same.

Here are some statements about grammar and teaching. Please say whether you agree or disagree according to the guidelines below. There are no right/wrong answers. Circle a number after each statement according to the degree to which you agree or not with it. For the purpose of this questionnaire, grammar is the set of rules that explain how words are used in a language. It is a set of components: phonetics (the production and perception of sounds), phonology (how sounds are combined), morphology (the study of forms, or how elements are combined to create words), syntax (how words are strung together into sentences), and semantics or meaning.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: English Grammar; Irish Grammar; and your own education.

1 = Yes, I agree a little

2 = Yes, I agree a lot

3 = I don't know

4 = No, I disagree a little

5 = No, I disagree a lot

6 = Not applicable

Please feel free to add any further comments/information you may wish under the space below each question.

English Grammar:

1. It is important to teach English Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Why?

Because grammar is to language what tables are to maths.

2. I enjoy teaching English Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Why?

Yes, because it is good to learn the right way to write etc.

3. I teach English Grammar per week: 1 2 3 4 5 6

One lesson x 25 minutes = 1

Two lessons x 25 minutes = 2

I don't know = 3

More than any of the above = 4

Less than any of the above = 5

Not applicable = 6

4. English Grammar is difficult to understand. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain.

I learned it to teach EAL.

5. I would teach English Grammar more often if I knew more about it. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain.

No, I teach what I need to.

6. I correct pupils if they use English Grammar incorrectly in their oral work.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain.

Depends on the ability of the child. I will correct if to do so does not shatter a child's confidence.

7. I correct pupils if they use English Grammar incorrectly in their written work.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain.

Yes, but would not leave loads of corrections ... depends on child and would try to encourage rather than undermine confidence.

Irish Grammar:

8. It is important to teach Irish Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 Why?
Yes, to learn the language.
9. I enjoy teaching Irish Grammar. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 Why do you think that is so?
Yes, because I love language teaching.
10. I teach Irish Grammar per week: 1 2 3 4 5 6
 One lesson x 25 minutes = 1
 Two lessons x 25 minutes = 2
 I don't know = 3
 More than any of the above = 4
 Less than any of the above = 5
 Not applicable = 6
11. I find Irish Grammar difficult to teach. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 Please explain.
Only if teachers need to explain everything through Irish and the child might not understand either.
12. I would teach Irish Grammar more often if I knew more about it. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 Please explain.
13. I correct pupils if they use Irish Grammar incorrectly in their oral work.
 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. I correct pupils if they use Irish Grammar incorrectly in their written work.
 1 2 3 4 5 6
 Please explain.
15. I think that understanding English Grammar helps me to understand Irish Grammar more easily. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 How so?
Yes, because you have the concept to relate it to.
16. I think that understanding English Grammar helps you to teach Irish Grammar more easily. 1 2 3 4 5 6
 How so?

Yes, for the same reason.

Your own education:

17. I was taught English Grammar when I went to primary school. 1 2 3 4 5 6

How often?

By one teacher in sixth only!

18. I was taught English Grammar at college as part of my teaching degree.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Yes we should have been but weren't ... I remember one teacher asked what an adjective was in French!!!!

19. I was taught how to teach English Grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree. 1 2 3 4 5 6

20. I was taught Irish Grammar during the course of my own primary education.

1 2 3 4 5 6

21. I was taught Irish Grammar at third-level education as part of my teaching degree.

1 2 3 4 5 6

It was taught in professional Irish.

22. I was taught how to teach Irish Grammar to primary pupils as part of my teaching degree. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Statistical Information

Please indicate below:

Male/female _____

Graduate of which teacher training college _____

Age range _____20–30_____30–40_____40–50__**X**__50–60

Number of years teaching ____**23**____

Many thanks for your contribution to this research